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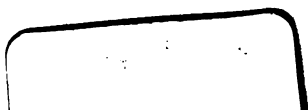
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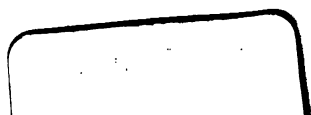


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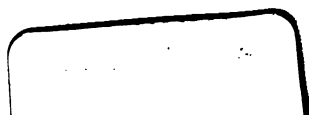


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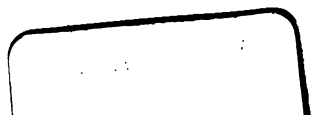


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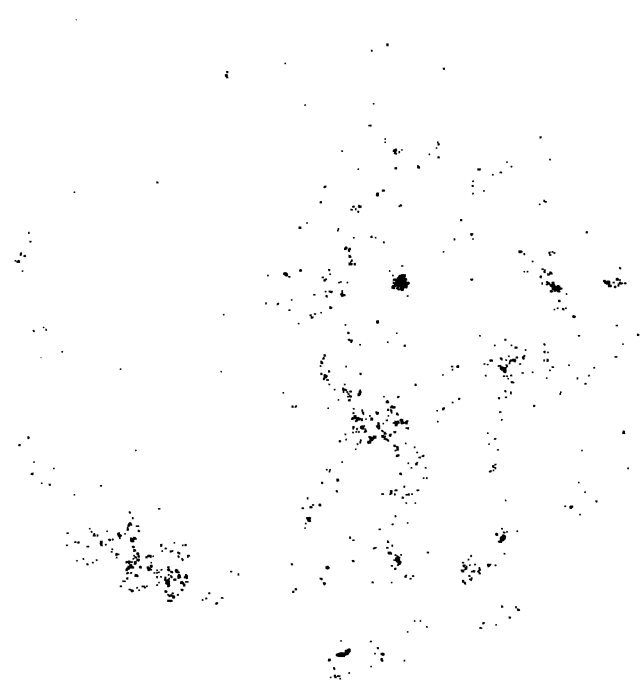
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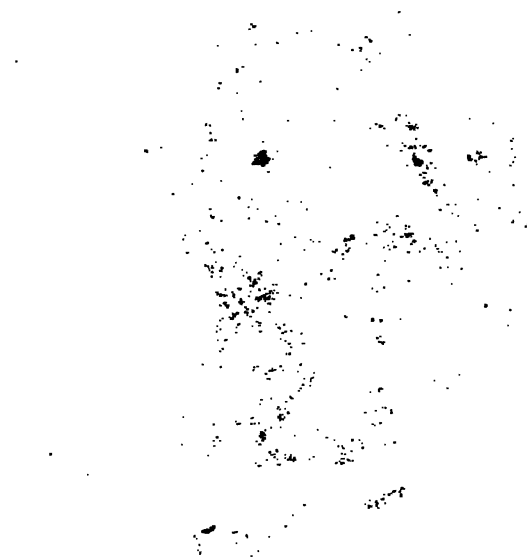
Redhall and Jane Seton,—“the Second Visit.”—p. 4.





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JANE SETON.

BY

JAMES GRANT, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF ROMANCE OF WAR, AIDE-DE-CAMP, &c.



VOL. II.

LONDON:

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO. FARRINGTON STREET.

JANE SETON:
OR,
THE KING'S ADVOCATE.

A Scottish Historical Romance.

BY
JAMES GRANT,
AUTHOR OF
"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE AIDE-DE-CAMP,"
ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO., FARRINGDON STREET
1853.

249. v. 497.



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JANE SETON:

OR,

THE KING'S ADVOCATE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECOND VISIT.

"Give me again my innocence of soul ;
Give me my forfeit honour blanchèd anew ;
Cancel my treasons to my royal master ;
Restore me to my country's lost esteem,
To the sweet hope of mercy from above,
And the calm comforts of a virtuous heart."

Edward the Black Prince.

THE soothing or sleeping draught had been duly administered by Tib Trotter, and Jane Seton slept.

Everything of late had happened most favourably for the intriguing lord advocate. The queen's delicate health, the king's anxiety, his fear and suspicion of the Douglasses ; the imprisonment of the countess on Inchkeith, and the retirement of the court to the Abbey of Balmerino ; but chiefly the young earl's proscription, the banishment of all his retainers from the city, and the protracted absence of Roland Vipont in Douglasdale, from whence it was to be hoped Birrel would never permit him to return alive, left Archibald Seton and his

sister utterly at the mercy of Redhall, the chambers of whose mansion were as secret and secure as those of the recently-established Holy Office at St. Andrew's.

Animated by no new evil intention, but solely by his clamorous desire to see her, to be near her, that he might touch her hands or kiss her cheek unrepelled, Redhall had administered the narcotic to his fair captive, whom he now prepared to visit.

It was midnight; his whole household was buried in slumber; and as the moment approached when he had proposed to pay this somewhat equivocal visit, a tremor took possession of his heart, a dimness came over his eyes, and he imbibed more than one glass of wine, to string his nerves and still his agitation.

"Poh!" said he, as his cheek reddened; "all this excitement about visiting a girl—a girl who is asleep, too."

Like many other Scottish houses where the walls were strong, Redhall's mansion was furnished with several narrow wheel-staircases, which, like gimlet-holes, perforated the edifice from top to bottom, communicating with the various stories. One of these descended from the door of his apartment to another which gave entrance to Jane Seton's, opening just behind the arras of her bed.

Redhall laid his poniard on the table, from which he took a candle, and treading softly in his maroquin slippers, found himself at the door of Jane's apartment, and there he paused. Though not a current of air swept up the narrow staircase, the candle in his tremulous hand streamed like a pennon, while a glow of fear and shame traversed his heart like a red-hot iron.

Tib had informed him that Lady Jane kept candles burning in her room all night; so, extinguishing his, he noiselessly opened the little private door, and drew

back the arras. A sense of flowers and perfume, mingled with the closer atmosphere of the chamber, was wafted towards him, and, by the light of two candles which, in massive square holders of Bruges silver, burned on the toilet-table, he was enabled to make a survey of the whole dormitory on which he was intruding. Though he was unconscious of any guilty intention, there was (he mentally acknowledged) something equivocal in the time and manner of his visit that appalled his heart. He felt shame glowing on his cheek; he saw spies in every shadow, and heard a voice in every echo of his own footfalls.

Softly he let the arras drop, but, in his excitement, forgot to close behind him the door which it was intended to conceal.

Unused, from the first hour she had occupied the chamber, the magnificent bed prepared for Jane Seton had not been disturbed, and with its cornices of carved oak, its festooned hangings and aspiring feathers, its heraldic blazonry and grotesque devices, it towered upon its dais like a monument in some old abbey aisle.

Placed on each side of a mirror, the two candles reflected a bright light upon the warmly-coloured tapestry of the apartment; the Persian carpet of its floor, the fresh flowers that, in jars of Venetian glass, decorated the mantel-piece, and all the innumerable little ornaments with which the taste and policy of Redhall had furnished it, to beguile the tedium or flatter the vanity of his unwilling prisoner.

"She sleeps!" said he, advancing on tiptoe, and shading his eyes with his hand, "she sleeps, and soundly too. Oh, how beautiful she is! How pure, how innocent she looks!" he added, gazing upon her, with eyes of adoration, for he loved her exceedingly, and with a

depth of regard which, though not based on the same sentiments of esteem, was nowise inferior perhaps to that of the more favoured Roland Vipont.

She was seated in a large arm-chair of the most luxurious description. Carved like a gigantic clamshell, the back, with its arms and sides, were of damask, stuffed with the softest down; and the woodwork was elaborately gilt. She reclined within it, with a hand, white as alabaster, resting on each of the arms; her head lay somewhat on her right shoulder, over which her unbound hair poured in a shower of ringlets, which, from her recumbent position, reached nearly to the ground. Her face was pale as her hands; but some vision was rising before her, through the depth of her slumber, and a soft smile played on her beautiful mouth.

Though feeling certain that, under the influence of what she had imbibed Jane would not awake, Redhall scarcely dared to breathe; but, impelled by the delirium that was rapidly mounting to his brain, a devouring longing to touch, to embrace her, possessed him; and, kneeling before his sleeping divinity, he kissed both her hands repeatedly and affectionately. Then he became giddy, and his heart beat furiously; pulses rang in his ears, and all his senses began to wander wildly; he gently encircled her with his arms, pressed her to his breast, and kissed her soft cheek again and again. A blindness seemed to come over him.

"Oh, beautiful, indeed, thou art, and most adorable, too; but proud and pitiless to me—to poor me, that loves thee so well!" he murmured, becoming almost maudlin; "why hast thou so great a horror of a poor being that would kiss the very dust whereon thou treadest? Oh, this love is bewildering me—I am not the same man—oh, no,—'tis a torment—a frenzy."

His hot, dry eyes became moistened, and one large tear fell upon the cheek of Jane.

She suddenly opened her large startled eyes, and fixed them upon him with an expression of terror and stupefaction; while his own astonishment was so great that he forgot to release her from his embrace.

The draught had been less potent than the apothegar intended.

"'Tis a dream!" she muttered, and closed her eyes; "another dream, but always that face of horror!"

Then, becoming more awake, and more alive to her situation, and feeling that the arms of some one encircled her, she shuddered, and, in great alarm, attempted to rise, but her limbs were powerless, and a strange numbness tied her to her chair. She made a superhuman effort to cry, but her tongue was powerless.

"Mother! mother! what is this? Assist me, for I am wholly at his mercy! I am in the power of a demon, who will fascinate me with his eyes."

Laying her gently back, his first impulse was to retreat before perfect consciousness returned; but she seemed so agitated, so woe-begone, and so frightfully pale, that he dared not leave her; and, on his knees, began to chafe in his her soft and dimpled hands.

Gradually, the truth forced itself upon Jane. Her actual tormentor and no vision was before her. She began to weep, and covered her face with her snow-white hands, over which her hair fell like a glossy veil.

"Oh, despair! despair! am I abandoned for ever? Roland, Roland! come to me, dearest Roland!" she exclaimed, incoherently. "Oh, man, man! why dost thou persecute me thus?"

Sir Adam Otterburn was stung to the heart by her words; but, sighing deeply, he gently parted her dishevelled hair, and said—

“Lady Jane, I am aware that I am guilty of great wrong towards you; but it is the guilt of love, and love should pardon the frenzy it has caused.”

“I can pardon your love, but can I pardon the misery it hath caused me? It is not the love of a sane man, but the fantasy of a madman. I am thy prisoner, lawlessly thy prisoner; but thou hast infamously violated the ties of honour and hospitality in breaking the privacy of a helpless woman. Fie upon thee, man! for I will raise upon thee even thine own detested household!”

She rose staggering, and more than once passed her hand across her forehead, for her faculties were as yet obscured by the potion.

“Oh, deem me not so vile!” said Redhall, clasping his hands, and looking upon her with the most sad and solemn earnestness. “I came but to see, to touch, to be near you, to breathe but the same air with you, to look upon you without being repulsed, to sit by and worship you; and I have done so with such adoration as I never felt even before the altar of my God; and I call Him to witness, if in my mind there was kindled one impure or one unholy thought.”

“Fool!” said Jane, bitterly, for she was full of angry alarm; “thou ravest like one of Lindesay’s playmen. Thy purity of thought should have made thee respect as sacred the chamber to which I am consigned. Sir Adam, in all thy love-making there is a fustian sophistry, which shews thou art immensely inferior to my Vipont; and he, though but a rough soldier, never

dared resort to blasphemy in expressing his love for me."

Jane saw the agony that Vipont's name always occasioned her tormentor, and could not forbear to sting him with it. A cold moisture studded his pale forehead with diamond-like drops; a satanic smile lit up with a gleam of undisguised jealousy his dark and homicidal eyes.

In this taunt she felt her strength; but saw not the danger of driving to despair a heart so fierce, so proud, so jealous and resentful. He approached, but she drew back with a haughty look.

"Beware, Sir Adam," said she, "for even if the king and his court forget that I am the daughter of John, Earl of Ashkirk, I have a dear brother, and a dearer *friend*, who, if they cannot at present protect, will one day surely and fearfully avenge me!"

"Proud lady," he replied, with calm fury, "if neither heaven nor hell can protect thee, dost think that thy brother, who is my prisoner, and whose life is in my hands; or that other miserable moth—that holiday captain, in steel plates and gilded scales, will succour, save, or avenge thee?"

"They will, they will, I tell thee, false baron and craven man; thou corrupt counsellor and cowardly Otterburn! And when Vipont returns, thou and all thy kindred may tremble, for neither the Otterburns of Redhall nor Redford, of Auldhame or Avondoune, will be able to withstand him."

He smiled sourly; and she uttered a scornful laugh.

"Woman, how pitilessly thou plantest poniards in a heart that loves thee well. Oh, beware! beware! for a single drop will make the cup that brims to overflow.

My heart can know no medium ; it is capable of only two extremes. Love the most blind, hatred the most insane ; and at times I feel that it vibrates between them. Beware of the last ; and, oh ! beware of thrusting this rival in my face, for slowly, but surely, drop by drop, as it were, a savage longing for revenge will gather in my heart ; yea, drop by drop, till it swells into a flood—a fierce, a furious flood, that bearing all before it (like a mountain torrent), will drown alike the stings of conscience and of pity, and, like a feather on its surface, will sweep you away with it.”

“Sir Roland Vipont is a gallant soldier, who will laugh alike at thy vengeance and thy bombast. True, wretch ! thou mayest murder him, as thou didst Mac Clellan of Bombie,” she continued, with eyes full of tears and fire ; “but even then we will find hearts and hands to avenge us.”

Redhall remained for some moments speechless with passion and confusion.

“Bombie !” he reiterated, turning ghastly pale ; “what leads you to suppose I ever committed a crime so frightful ? Speak ! But this is the wordy anger of a woman. You talk of an affair which happened eleven years ago, when you must have been but little more than a child. Lady, these words are rash and unadvised. Oh ! I implore thee to beware of exciting in my heart the hatred of which I spoke, and of which I feel it capable.”

“Then I will repeat them a thousand and a thousand times, thou murderer of the brave Sir Thomas Mac Clellan, my father’s long-loved friend. I need care little for thy *hatred*, when thy mad love costs me so dear.”

"My hatred—beware, I implore thee once again—beware of it!"

Lady Seton laughed; and a gloomy expression gathered in the dark solemn eyes of Redhall.

"Think, dear lady—think," said he, "of the ruin that hangs over thee and thy house."

"Do thou rather reflect on that, and remember that, were I to wed thee, for ever wouldst thou lose the favour of James, the cardinal, and their obsequious parliament; destroying thyself without lessening by one iota the thousand pitiless severities to which the knights and barons of our faction are subjected."

"Nay, lady, nay; I who have done can *undo*. Many of those acts of proscription and severity were enacted by my advice and by my influence."

"Another incentive to abhor thee."

"But I can restore the banished to their homes—the dishonoured to honour—the unhappy to happiness—the ruined and despairing to wealth and affluence; and to do all this by a word lies with thee alone."

"St. Mary! I know not whether to weep with vexation, or laugh at thee with scorn," said Jane, in great distress and perplexity, for she could not but acknowledge mentally that he spoke the truth. "Oh, Vipont! Vipont!" she added, in a low voice, "assuredly thou hast abandoned me."

Another wild gleam passed over the eyes of Redhall.

"Rash woman, how thou bravest me! If thy heart, insensible as it is, has neither love for me, nor pity for the knights and nobles of thy race, surely at least it will tremble for thyself! Behold this warrant," he continued, drawing a parchment from his bosom; "from this house, Jane Seton, thou canst only pass to the

castle of Edinburgh. Here are accusations of treason ; of conspiring with the English ; of resetting rebels ; and worse, oh ! worse a thousand times than all—sorcery, and compassing, by spell and charm, the life of Queen Magdalene.”

He paused, and his lowering countenance assumed a diabolical expression ; for his stormy passions were wavering (as he had said) between excess of love and excess of hate.

“Ponder well upon my offer, and deeper upon my threat ; respect the first, and—fear the second. Life, honour, power, and happiness, are in my right hand ; trial and torture, disgrace and death, the stake and the gibbet, are in my left. Here, love the most tender and most true ; there, revenge revelling like an unchained fiend ! Think, think, oh ! for mercy’s sake—for pity’s sake ; and for the love of God, think, ere thou dost for the last time pause or repel me.”

Trembling, and scarcely able to restrain her tears—

“Sir Adam Otterburn,” she replied, “I despise alike these offers and those threats ; for if not a villain, and a cruel one, thou art (and, Heaven protect me !) assuredly a madman.”

His countenance became livid, and his eyes sad.

“Then so be it—a *madman* ! Then, as a madman, let me have but one soul, one thought, and one desire—vengeance ! the deep, thirsty vengeance of madness, of jealousy and despair !”

Terrified by his aspect and his fury, Jane had withdrawn to the farthest end of the apartment ; when a new gust of passion seized him, and he sprang towards her.

“There is but *one* way left me now. Am I a child, a boy, a fool, that I trifle with thee, who art pitiless

as a panther, and inanimate as marble?" he exclaimed, as he seized her, and endeavoured to encircle her with his arms; "in this house thou art completely in my power as in the midst of a desert, and now—and now——"

"Mercy!" cried Jane, filled with a sudden sense of new danger, as she endeavoured to elude his wild grasp, and the gaze of his large, dark, gloating eyes, and prayed aloud for safety and protection.

"Ay, invoke and cry, and pray to God or to man, as thou pleasest; but will either hear thee?"

"Vipont! Vipont!"

"Ha! ha! the hand of Birrel is in his heart."

"Archibald!" she panted, sinking down against the wall, and overcome with terror. "Oh, Archibald, my brother, my brother!"

"*Here!*" cried a voice like a trumpet; the arras was torn aside, and a man sprang forward—there was a flash as a poniard was buried in the breast of Redhall, and the black velvet of his doublet was stained with red, a cloud of darkness descended upon his eyes; and as he fell weltering in his blood, Jane was borne away by the strong intruder.

CHAPTER II.

SANCTUARY ! SANCTUARY !

“ A strange emotion stirs within him—more
Than mere compassion ever waked before ;—
Unconsciously he opes his arms, while she
Springs forward, as with life's lost energy.”

Lalla Bookh.

THE Earl of Ashkirk, on finding that he was actually possessor of a small steel knife, could scarcely repress his joy till nightfall, or refrain from indulging in a merry song ; so his exuberance expended itself in whistling, and drawing on the walls a variety of caricatures of Redhall hanging upon a gallows, invariably appending to his face an enormous nose ; for that feature of the lord advocate, though straight and singularly handsome, was, to say the least of it, somewhat long and dignified.

As the sun set, he employed himself in tapping with the handle of the knife the various stones of the partition wall, for the idea of effecting a breach through the vast solidity of the external barrier never occurred to him.

There was one part of the inner wall which was jointed with remarkably large and square stones, where, by the frequent sound of feet ascending and descending,

he felt assured there was a stair behind ; and there he resolved to commence operations the moment he was confident of being left undisturbed for that night.

He was singularly facetious with Tam Trotter when the latter, as usual, left him for the last time about six o'clock, and secured all the doors. By this time the earl had decided upon which stone to operate, and selected one about four feet from the floor ; he marked it with a cross for good luck, and after viewing his treasured knife for the thousandth time, repaired to his little window to watch the lagging sunset.

Never, even when longing for a meeting with Sybil, did the moments pass so slowly.

The evening was still and calm, and not a leaf was stirring in the venerable chesnuts and sycamores at the foot of the little park which extended towards the south, behind the house of Redhall. The sunlight died away on Arthur's Seat, and the sky gradually deepened to a darker and more cerulean blue, and one by one the stars came out of its bosom ; the hum of the city, and other sounds of life without, ceased gradually, and nothing was heard but now and then the striking of a friary clock, or the jangling bells in the convent of Placentia. Night—the short but beautiful night of June—had come on ; and one might have imagined that another and a softer day was dawning in the glorious light of the midsummer moon, as it rose in unclouded magnificence above the Craigs of Salisbury ; then with the first ray that shone into his chamber, the earl, whose heart beat rapidly and almost fiercely with anxiety, and whose hands trembled, but with eagerness, drew forth his treasured knife, and commenced the arduous and exciting work of escape.

Fitted close as books on a shelf, squared and built

with little mortar, the task of loosening and completely disengaging one stone occupied hours. The knife bent like a willow wand; and the earl's heart almost sunk with fear lest it should break, and that if he failed or was discovered at such a task, a stronger prison, perhaps a hopeless dungeon, might be apportioned to him. Loosened on all aides, the stone he had selected was a block a foot high by eighteen inches broad; it vibrated to the touch, but the utmost exertion and art he could put in practice failed to coax it one inch from its deep bed in the wall; the knife, his nails, his fingers, were all resorted to successively again and again, but in vain—it shook, it vibrated, but obstinately remained in its place, till in a fit of fury, and when about to abandon the task in despair, he uttered a malediction, and gave the stone a violent push with both his hands. Then, lo! it shot through the wall to the outside, and disengaging others in its passage, fell upon what Lord Ashkirk discovered in a moment to be a step of one of those narrow stairs we have described in the preceding chapter.

The echoes of its fall died away in the stony windings of the stair; and grasping his knife, the earl stood for a moment petrified, lest all his labour and anxiety were lost, and the noise should rouse the household; but fortunately (save their master) all the members of it were buried in profound repose. The earl could hear his heart beating, as the blood rushed back tumultuously upon it; but all remained still as death, and he could hear the corbies croaking as they swung in their nests among the foliage of the ancient trees without.

There was not a moment to be lost.

With some difficulty he crawled through the aperture, and found himself in a dark and narrow stair. His first thought was to replace the heavy stone, which he

did with ease, for this gallant young noble was strong as a Hercules; thus, as the breach was immediately behind the door, it was concealed from those who might enter the chamber; and hence the dismay of Tam Trotter on the morrow, when he found it void, without knowing or perceiving how.

The earl was naturally about to descend, when the cry of a female arrested him; and though he knew not with certainty that his sister Jane was in the power of Sir Adam Otterburn, the voice made him experience something like an electric shock; and he sprang up the stair, taking three steps at a time.

The first apartment he entered was empty; a light burned on the table, which bore a pyramid of letters and papers; the walls were shelved, and covered with vellum-bound volumes—it was the study or library of the lord advocate. A Flemish clock, in workmanship and aspect little superior to a common roasting-jack of modern times, hung above the mantel-piece, and pointed to the hour of twelve.

Above him the earl heard voices, whose purport he could not discover, but whose tones seemed familiar to his ear.

Appropriating to himself a handsome poniard that lay on the table, just where Redhall had placed it about an hour before, he sprang to the next story, at the door of which a candle was burning on the floor: it streamed in a current of air, which announced to the observant earl that there must be an external door below.

The voices were those of his sister Jane and their enemy, Redhall.

A storm of passion filled his heart; and at the very moment she was exclaiming—"Archibald! oh, Ar-

chibald, my brother!" he tore aside the arras, and striking Redhall to the floor with his own poniard, seized his sister by the hand, and led, or rather dragged her forth, and down the steep stair, at the bottom of which they found themselves in the vaulted stone lobby of the mansion. Everything was yet silent.

The flaring light of a smoky oil lamp which stood on a grotesque stone bracket projecting from the wall, revealed its furniture, which consisted of little more than a few sturdy oak chairs, and a stout binn, whereon stood an ale barrel, with a quaigh hanging on its spigot, wherewith the servants of visitors, or whoever chose, might quench their thirst; for such was the hospitable fashion of the olden time. At the further end of the lobby* was an arch closed by a strong door, which was secured by one ponderous wooden bar, that crossed it transversely, and had a solid rest in the walls at each side.

To shoot back this bar of oak, to open the heavy door, and rush into the Canongate, were but the work of a moment—and then Lord Ashkirk and his sister were free.

"Oh, Archibald! Archibald!" cried Jane, as she threw herself into the arms of her brother in a transport of grief and excitement—"am I quite saved—and by you?"

"I have not a moment to lose, dear Jeanie, for the bloodhounds of Redhall will be upon my track. Yonder is our house. I dare not enter it; but once there, thou at least art safe."

* Scottish for an entrance hall; derived, I believe, from the German *laube*: a gallery, or walking place.

"With my mother—oh, yes; when with my mother I will fear nothing. Our dear mother! but thou——?"

"Must hasten hence. Edinburgh will be too hot to hold me after this affair; and already I have been too rash in residing here. Hah!" he exclaimed, half-savagely, but with a shudder, as he held up his hand, "this is the blood of Redhall! There will be a vacant gown in the High Court to-morrow—one villain less in that tribunal of cowards! Here, then, thou art safe. I will cross into Fife, even should I swim the Firth, and will retire towards the Highlands, as the king will be sure to look for me on the Borders. Tell Vipont of this, and intrust yourself to him, for he alone can protect thee now. I can no more."

"But Roland is in Douglasdale, and our mother a prisoner in the castle of Inchkeith!"

The earl gnashed his teeth with passion.

"How many wheels hath this dark conspiracy!" said he. "Ha! 'tis well I struck deep to-night."

"See, Archibald, our house is dark and deserted; the gates are locked. Oh! such silence and desolation!"

"What shall we do now? If I ~~stay~~ with thee I shall be taken, and, if taken, shall indubitably be hanged *red hand*. See, this horrible poniard is actually glued to my fingers!"

"Away thou to the hills, and leave me. Oh, Archibald! seek shelter anywhere. Thou art the last hope of us all, Archibald! with thee our father's name, and fame, and race would perish."

"True; and what is worth them all, our hopes of vengeance on the Hamiltons. I must live for that! This night hath commenced it; and my hand has struck one from the list of Angus's foes and Arran's friends. Jane, we are now past the Girth Cross; thou art safe

now, for not even Redhall would dare to violate the holy sanctuary. Its girdle will protect thee like a magic zone. Remain in the abbey church till daybreak, and then Sir John Forrester, who is Roland's friend—a good man, and a gallant knight, will see thee in safety to our mother's side. One kiss, dear Jeanie, and then a long farewell till better times."

Jane thought of the terrible warrant which Redhall had held before her eyes; but fearing to delay her brother, or to alarm him more, she tendered her soft cheek, against which he pressed his long rough beard, and there they parted, in the middle of that dark and deserted street; for the light of a pale and waning moon threw the sombre shadow of the ancient Mint far beyond the Girth Cross, which, on its shaft of stone, stood in the centre of the street. Reflected from the large masses of white clouds that were scudding over the city, the cold moonlight shone on the vanes of the palace gate, and the square towers of the abbey church, for it then had three—a great rood tower, and one on each side of the entrance.

Intimate with all the localities of the town, the carl avoided the water-gate, where he knew a sentinel was posted; and passed down a narrow close overhung by many a "sclaited lodging" and antique "timber-land;" he reached the wall at the bottom unseen, scaled it with agility, and found himself close to the hospital of St. Thomas, which was then in the course of erection, by George Crichton, Bishop of Dunkeld, and dedicated to the Virgin and all the saints, for the health of his own soul and the souls of the kings of Scotland, for so runs the charter of its foundation. From thence he bent his steps towards Leith, hoping with the dawn to cross the Forth by the first ferry-boat that departed for Kinghorn.

Though weak, feeble, and sinking with terror, Jane Seton, instead of hurrying at once to Holyrood, the dimly lighted shrines of which were visible through its western windows and doorway (for *then* church doors stood permanently open), lingered affectionately so long as her brother was in sight, nor turned away until he had disappeared.

At the porch, which served both as an entrance to the ancient abbey and to the new palace, was a doorway, where hung a certain bell, which was only rung by those claiming the ancient and still sacred privilege of sanctuary. Opposite was an edifice occupied as a guardhouse by the king's arquebusiers.

"Mother of mercy, be praised!" she exclaimed, with a heart full of thankfulness, as she raised her hand trembling with eagerness to the bellrope, when, lo! swift as light, a man sprang into the archway, cut the cord, and seized her by the arm. Jane uttered a faint cry, and sank against the wall, on seeing the hateful visage of Dobbie, the doomster, and hearing his false and hollow laugh in her ear. There was a savage leer in his eyes, and he lolled out a long red tongue through his short wiry beard, as he arrested her.

On one side lay the porter-lodge of the abbey, where she would have received a sanctuary; on the other lay the guardhouse of the soldiers; and she knew that if discovered by them, after what Redhall had told her, she would indeed be lost. On one hand lay life—on the other death!

"Sanctuary!" she cried with a despairing voice, as she clung to the handle of the door; "sanctuary, father abbot—good master porter! In the name of the blessed Trinity, sanctuary! For the love of God and St. Mary, sanctuary! sanctuary! Oh man,

man," she continued wildly, as the wretch threw his arms around her, and forcibly dragged her away, "what wrong have I ever done thee? Oh, for my brother's dagger now!—pity, pity! I am very weak and ill. Sweet Mother of Compassion have mercy upon me, for others have none!"

Her voice failed and sense began to leave her.

"How now—what the devil!" cried a rough voice, "whose brittle ware may this lass be?"

"By St. Girzy, a fair strapping dame!" cried another.

"Let go the lass, rascal, or I will brain thee with the boll of my arquebuse!" exclaimed a third, as several soldiers of the guard came hurriedly out of the porch with their swords drawn and matches lighted.

Jane's eyes were closed, but she felt several hands laid roughly upon her, as she was dragged into the court of guard.

"Ho! ho!—blood!" said one; "hath this squeeling mudlark committed a murder? see, there are red spots on her crammasie kirtle."

"Yea, and worse," said Dobbie; "she is a sorceress of the house of Seton; and here is my lord the cardinal's warrant for her committal to ward, signed and sealed wi' his braid hat, tassels and a'."

"A sorceress!" muttered the soldiers; and Jane felt their hands withdrawn as they shrunk back; and at that moment a deadly faintness came over her. . . .

Meanwhile, passing under the dark brow of the Doo-craig, a rock of the Calton, and past the old street and chapel of St. Ninian, which lay on the opposite eminence, the earl hurried down the long pathway then known as the Loan, which led to Leith. St. Anthony's Gate, which closed the seaport towards Edinburgh, was shut, but with the first peep of dawn it was opened by

the warders ; and as the earl had bestowed the interval in cleansing himself from several spots of blood, and adjusting his toilet, he passed without question the keepers of the barrier, and several of the old hospitallers of St. Anthony, who, even at that early hour, were perambulating the Kirkgate in their long black cassocks, which had a large T and a bell shaped in blue cloth on the breasts thereof.

At the pier—an ancient erection of wood which was burned by the English during Hertford's wanton invasion seven years after—the earl found the Kinghorn sloop just about to sail, and sprang on board, descending from the pier to the deck by one of those old fashioned *treenebriggs*, which, by an act of the legislature in 1425, all ferriers were bound to have prepared for the safe shipment of horse and man. Unchanged since the days of James I., the fare was then only twopence Scots for a man or woman, and sixpence for a horse, under pain of imprisonment in the Tolbooth, and the forfeiture of forty shillings to the crown in case of extortion ; thus the earl, though his funds were low indeed, easily passed on board, among the Fifeshire cottars and Burrowtown merchants of small wares, who crowded the low waist of the little vessel, which in a short time was running past the Mussel Cape and the Beacon Rock (whereon the martello tower now stands), and bearing away for the quaint and venerable town of Kinghorn, which lies on the opposite shore.

CHAPTER III.

THE PORTE OF THE SPUR.

“What! no reprieve, no least indulgence given,
No beam of hope from any point of heaven?
Ah, mercy! mercy! art thou dead above?
Is love extinguished in the source of love?”

The Last Day, Book III.

REDHALL's second wound was of the most dangerous kind. It was below that inflicted by Roland, but nearer the region of the heart; it bled profusely; and his blind passion and fury on discovering that Lady Jane had really escaped, carried him beyond all bounds. While Trotter sprang on horseback, and galloped off for John of the Silvermills, and Dobbie, armed with the warrant, was dispatched to recapture the fugitive Jane and her brother the earl, and have them secured in the castle of Edinburgh, Redhall, in a paroxysm of rage and despair, so great, that it rendered him supine and powerless, lay on his bed as in a swoon, until the arrival of the physician, on whom, as on all, he enjoined (under the most tremendous threats) solemn silence concerning a wound, the inflicter of which he declined to name.

The strong emotions of anger and revenge, which, with every fresh interview, rejection, and defeat, had

been gradually gathering in his heart, had now indeed swollen, drop by drop, to the torrent he had predicted; and, like the reed upon the current, she was about to be swept away with it.

"Harkye, Dobbie!" said he, through his clenched teeth, between which the blood was oozing, as he writhed in agony on his bed; "harkye! give me thy thumb; silence on all this—as thou livest, my good man, and true—silence on this matter—I tell thee, *silence!* Here is the warrant—seek the Albany herald and captain of the guard—quick! have this woman committed to ward, as it imports!"

"Should she say she has been our prisoner already?"

"Begone, fool! who would believe her? Hence—hence, my God!—go, wretch," he added, in a low, hissing voice, as Dobbie hurried away; "go, and accomplish this my work of vengeance; and, one day or other, I shall brush thee too from my path, like the bloated spider thou art!"

In half an hour the physician arrived; and the light of the dull grey dawn presented a figure which certainly had something very appalling in it, for, in his haste, he had come away, wearing a mask which was furnished with two large, green, globular glass eyes, to protect his face from the poisonous air and scorching heats of his laboratory. His high and wrinkled forehead lowered above it, and his long beard flowed below.

The wound was speedily bathed and salved; and lint, with a bandage, was applied.

"Thou seest, friend, that I find this new office of king's advocate no sinecure," said Redhall, with a fierce smile. "A thousand furies—how the wound smarts!"

"'Tis the *unguentum armarium*," replied the learned

John, with medical composure; "one touch is sufficient to make such a wound as this shrink to the size of a pin-thrust, and two ought to efface it."

"I feel as if the dagger was still in my heart! Two touches cure, sayest thou?"

"Yea, my lord."

"I pray they may do so."

"They must, Sir Adam, if thou followest rigidly my prescriptions, which are here," and from his pouch he produced various phials marked with those cabalistic figures which are still so much in vogue among apothecaries. These he drew up in line, with their labels hanging like shields before them. "Here is my Elixir of Life, which the care of many a long year hath yet failed to perfect, for lack of a certain herb which groweth in Arabia Petræa, and is the real *arbor vitæ*—the tree of life of the patriarchs; but still its restorative and strengthening properties are wondrous! Here are my mercurial balm, and the essence of acorns, which last giveth to the bones the strength of the oak tree, and to the nerves and sinews the toughness and tenacity of the ivy. A spoonful of each are taken night and morning, dissolved in a little warm water; and doubt not, Sir Adam, that this day week will behold you a strong man, and well—yea, with redoubled energies, like those whom the Cassida of the pagan Romans restored to life."

And with these words the physician retired, leaving Redhall to writhe and struggle, in solitude, with his mental and bodily agonies—the former outdoing the latter by a thousand fold.

Our learned astrologer enjoyed a great reputation in Edinburgh, and doubtless would have enjoyed a still greater in the present day, if we may judge of the

success of southern quacks and quackeries; as they, like everything that is English, enjoy a vast popularity among the Scottish vulgar.

At this time Lady Jane Seton was at the porch of the palace, from whence Dobbie had dispatched one soldier for the Albany herald, and another to Sir John Forrester. On reviving, she found herself surrounded by arquebusiers in their steel caps, gorgets, and bandoliers, gazing on her with bold and scrutinizing eyes.

"What manner o' lassie is this?" said they, crowding round her chair, and winking to each other. "A dainty bird—i'faith!" said one.

"What hands;—how white!" said another.

"What ankles!" said a third connoisseur, stooping down. "Soul o' my body! but a glisk o' these would damn St. Anthony and St. Andrew to boot!"

"I am Jane Seton of Ashkirk," said she, suddenly opening her eyes, and looking wildly and imploringly upon them; "oh, where is your captain, my good soldiers—where is Sir John of Corstorphine?"

"He will be here immediately, madam," said one, while the rest fell back respectfully and abashed, and several felt themselves constrained to uncover before her, and removed their helmets. Though every man in the ranks of the royal guard was a born vassal and kinsman of the house of Hamilton, that inborn respect for gentle-blood which the Scots possess in a high degree, together with that generous frankness which the camp always teaches, impressed with silence the thirty soldiers who occupied the court-of-guard; and the noisy jests and laughter, which first greeted and surrounded Lady Jane, immediately became hushed.

Seeing that she was faint and pale, one, without being asked, filled his drinking-horn with water, and

brought it to her. Her fine eyes gave him a look of thankfulness that sank deep into the honest fellow's heart, and then she drank thirstily.

Pulling a ring from her finger, she offered it to him, but he shook his head, and drew back, saying, with a smile:—

“Nay, lady; a die sæ braw is useless to the like o’ me, a puir soldier-lad.”

“But I owe thee something for thy kindness.”

“Ye owe me nothing, Lady Jean; my mother was a Seton.”

At that moment Sir John Forrester, who had been summoned from his lodgings in the palace, and had come forth armed with soldier-like alacrity, entered, with his visor up, displaying the sad and dark cloud that hovered on his brow; for the watchful Dobbie had met him in the palace-yard, and placed in his hand the warrant for Lady Jane’s arrest and “committal to ward,” as they phrased it in those days.

“To your arms!” said he, waving his hand to the soldiers, who immediately took their arquebusses from the rack, where they stood in a row, and leaving the guard-house, fell into their ranks before it.

“My dear Lady Jane,” said the courtly knight, taking both her hands in his, the moment they were left alone; “from what has all this frightful affair arisen?”

Jane answered only with her tears.

“Lady—dear lady, of what are you guilty?”

“Ask the leaders of your faction, Sir John,” she replied, bitterly; “but ask not me.”

“My faction, lady?”

“Thou servest the Court?”

“Nay, madam, I serve the king, like Sir Roland

Vipont, whose fast friend I am ; and as such, I beg permission to be thine."

"I thank you, Sir John Forrester," replied Jane, with another passionate burst of tears ; "but, were my father and the Lord Angus here, as of old, I had needed no other friends ; but, alas ! the one lieth now in his grave at St. Giles, while the other is a poor and impoverished exile, compelled to eat the bread of Englishmen. Alas ! I am now totally forsaken."

"Nay, lady ; for here stand I, John Forrester of Corstorphine, ready to be your champion ; and as such, to maintain your innocence against all men living, body for body, according to the laws of battle and of arms."

"A thousand thanks, Sir John ; but remember, Sir Roland Vipont claims priority in that. Meanwhile, let me leave this place."

"And dost thou know for where ?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, with a bitter smile ; "for the castle of Edinburgh ; be it so ; I am not the first of my race who has paid dearly the penalty of opposing tyranny. There were Sir John de Seton, and his kinsman Sir Christopher de Seton, captain of Lochdoon, who were so barbarously murdered after surrender, by English Edward, and my grandsire William Seton, who fell at Verneuil, fighting against the English, under Lord Buchan, the Constable of France. Let us go—let us go ! the sooner this frightful drama is ended the better. Oh, they are good men and gallant soldiers, those courtiers of King James—those slaves and parasites of Arran. Sir John, I await you."

"But you cannot go thus—on foot, lady. Excuse me, but for a moment."

He dispatched a messenger to the palace for a horse

and a pillion, and to beg the favour of a riding-cloak from the Lady Barncleugh; both of which were brought in a few minutes.

In this interval, Jane, with great energy but incoherence, and amid frequent bursts of tears and indignation, had related the story of her abduction and retention by Redhall; but, dreading to criminate her brother, or afford, even to this friendly gentleman, the least clue to his flight, she blundered the whole episode of her escape, and became so perplexed and confused, that Sir John Forrester considered the whole affair as a mere hallucination, and listened with a face expressive only of pity and sincere sorrow; and thus she found her tale received by all to whom she afterwards ventured to relate it; for the reputation for high moral worth and sterling integrity enjoyed by Redhall, placed him as on a lofty pedestal, above the reach of ordinary calumny, though some men *did* at times shake their heads and look mysteriously at the mention of the gallant Sir Thomas of Bombie, whose blood stained the steps at the north door of St. Giles for many a year after the era of James V.

The sun was up and shone joyously on the palace towers and the vanes of its ancient porch, on the battlements of the traitor's tower (which Moyse speaks of in his memoirs) and the beautiful façade designed by Hamilton of Fimart, when Lady Jane was led forth from the pointed archway.

She was mounted on the pillion behind Sir John Forrester; and thereafter followed by the Albany herald with the warrant, and a party of the guard marching with matches cocked and lighted, she proceeded at a rapid pace towards the castle; for even at that early hour, the High-street was beginning to be busy. The

guards and warders were unclosing the portes and barriers; the merchants were opening their booths, and displaying their wares under those long arcades which then were on both sides of the street, and remnants of which still exist in several places; farm horses laden with barrels, baskets, and boxes were pouring into the markets, and the water-carriers were crowding round the fountains at the Cross and the Mile-end.

A party of the king's guard, with a knight in full armour, and a female prisoner riding behind him, drew the burghesses from all quarters to the centre of the street.

"Jean Seton of Ashkirk," flew from mouth to mouth, mingled with mutterings of commiseration and hatred, as the sympathies or antipathies of the rabble led them. Many there were who mourned that one so young and fair should be made another sacrifice to the animosity avowedly borne by the king and court against that humbled faction which had triumphed over both so long, and many there were who remembered the deadly strife of 1520:—

"When startled burghers fled afar,
The furies of the border war;
When the streets of high Dunedin,
Saw axes gleam, and falchions redden;"

when, sheathed in full mail, her father, at the head of a hundred barbed horsemen, had thrice hewn a passage through the barricaded streets, giving to death and defeat the spearmen of Arran. Many women, whose husbands and fathers, lovers and brothers, had fallen on that terrible 29th of April, recalled their treasured hatred as keenly as if the strife of seventecn years had been enacted but seventeen hours ago, and openly, bitterly, and un pityingly reviled her.

"A Hamilton! a Hamilton!"

"Doon wi' the Setons! doon wi' the Douglasses! doon wi' the star and the bluidy heart!"

"Set her up, wi' her lace and her pearlins sae braw, when an honest wife like me wears but a curstsey o' flannel!"

"Holy Virgin!" cried another crone in a grey cloak and a flanders-mutch; "and to think I hae taen an awmous frae this Seton sorceress! 'Twas weel I had my relique o' blessed St. Roque aboot me!"

"Fie upon thee, thou fause Seton! Death to the witch! bones to the fire, and soul to Satan!"

Full of horror at these frightful and opprobrious cries, this poor being, whose gentleness had never created her a personal enemy, surrounded by her guard and a vast mob that every moment grew more dense as the street narrowed, arrived at the Castle Port, an ancient and massive archway in the Spur, which then lay between the castle and the town, covering the whole of what is now called the Esplanade, and surmounted by a round bastion, displaying a flag and more than twenty pieces of brass cannon.

There the governor of the fortress—the strong towers of which were looming redly and grimly in the morning sunshine above the parapets and glacis of this hornwork—received Lady Jane, as the king's prisoner, from the herald and captain of the guard, who drew his soldiers across the Castle-hill-street to bear back the tumultuous crowd, whose clamour reverberated with a thousand echoes in that high and narrow thoroughfare.

Bareheaded and ungloved, the castellan, Sir James Riddel of Cranstoun-Riddel, a gallant and courtly soldier, received her with the utmost respect, and assisted her to alight. As she did so her riding hood

fell back, and her pale beautiful face was revealed to the people, who began anew to murmur variously. Then it was (such is the power of beauty) that many pitied, though more still hated and upbraided her; for the tide of common clamour in Edinburgh was against the Angus faction, among whom, in camp and council, her father and brother had borne a prominent part, having more than once, at point of the sword, thrust their vassals as magistrates upon the people.

Confused and terrified by a scene so unusual, Jane murmured she knew not what, as her thanks and adieux to Sir John Forrester, and gave her hand to the governor, who led her within the archway, on the battlements of which was seen the head of the Master of Forbes, who a short time before had been beheaded for raising a sedition in the Scottish camp at Fala, and attempting to shoot king James with an arquebuse. Though pale and exhausted by the terrors of the night, with eyes purple and inflamed by weeping, she gave a sad and perhaps scornful smile at that strong arch, the massive wall, and iron-jagged gate, whereon her father once had nailed his glove in defiance of Arran; but her heart sunk when she really found herself within those lofty walls, where so many had pined in hopeless captivity; nor could she repress a shudder when the rattling portcullis closed behind her, sinking slowly down with a jarring sound between its stony grooves.

The Lady of Cranstoun-Riddel, a kind, and (as the Scots term it) "motherly body," now approached her, and said,—

"Lady Jane Seton, in the name of the blessed Mary, what is the meaning of all this?"

"Dearest madam, I know as little as thee," said Jane, throwing herself upon the bosom of this kind

matron, rejoicing to find that one of her own sex, who, though even an entire stranger, could sympathize with her, and who, in age, appearance and manner, so nearly resembled her beloved mother. "Indeed, madam," continued Jane, sobbing, "I swear to you that I am ignorant of the cause; but I am accused of murder, of sorcery, of treason, and I know not what more,—I, that have not the heart to kill even the smallest insect. There must indeed be sorcery in this, but not with me."

"My puir bairn! my puir bairn! thou must thole mickle, ere these dark charges are cleared and refuted."

"Yea, madam; for, as my brother truly said, we are but the victims and playthings of tyranny and misrule."

"Lady," said Sir James Riddel, gravely, but respectfully, "you are here by the orders of James V. and his eminence the cardinal, who fourteen days ago sent me instructions to receive you, but you had disappeared on the very night his warrant was issued. Remember, lady, that the king *is* the king; besides, my lord advocate—pardon me if my words disturb you, for I am a rough old rider of James III.'s days, and unused to speaking daintily."

Jane shuddered at the name of her persecutor; and hurriedly, but with more coherence than before, began the story of her recent abduction, and more recent escape. Again, to her infinite chagrin, she found that she was utterly disbelieved, for the knight regarded her with a kind but sad smile of commiseration, as one whom terror had slightly "demented;" she saw him elevate his eyebrows, and nod perceptibly as he exchanged a glance with his lady, who kindly smoothed Jane's glossy hair, kissed her again as a mother would have done, and led her through

the Spur, and up the Castle-rock towards King David's Tower. Stung to the soul by this provoking disbelief, she became immediately silent, and resolved to explain no more.

As they proceeded through the vast hornwork, which, as we have said, covered the whole Castle-hill, between the loopholes and embrasures, she obtained glimpses of the rough bank that shelved abruptly down to the loch on the north, and of the reedy loch itself, where the wild ducks and swans were floating, and of the bare ridge of pasture land where now the modern city is built.

"So I am now a captive in the Castle of Edinburgh, while my poor mother pines on Inchkeith! where will the events of this dark drama end?" thought she; and her heart sank lower still as the gigantic gates of the Constable's Tower were closed and barred behind her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREE TREES OF DYSART.

"I launched my spear, and with a sudden wound
Transpierced his back, and fix'd him to the ground;
He falls, and mourns his fate with human cries:
Through the wide wound, the vital spirit flies."

Odyssey, Book X.

AT the time when the fugitive earl bent his course towards the county (or, as it is popularly named, *the* kingdom) of Fife, the whole length and breadth of it, from the gates of St. Andrew's in the east neuk to those of Dunfermline in the west neuk, and from the waters of the Forth on the south to those of the Tay on the north, was full of terror by the ravages of an enormous wolf, which had established his quarters in the old forest of Pittencrief; from whence he extended his visits as far as the woods of Donnibrissal and Falkland, and along the winding coast even so far as the cave of St. Monan. He was somewhat particular in his taste, and always preferred little children, when they could be had, as being more tender than either sheep or calves. He prowled about the most populous burrow-touns, and sometimes darted through their main streets at midday, making a passing snap at whoever chanced to be in his way; thus those little ones whose occupation it was to

fish for pow-wowets in the pools of water which then encumbered the streets, or made dams and dirt-pies in the gutters, were in imminent danger, for his foraging excursions extended along the whole Howe of Fife.

The wood-cutters were afraid to venture into the forests, which made firing so dear, that one or two hapless "heretics" in the castle of St. Andrew's were not burnt for a whole week after the Laird of Fynnard, High Inquisitor under Paul III., had solemnly delivered them over to the devil and the devouring element. The little birds held jubilee in every hedge and hawthorn tree, for their nests were now respected by truants and harriers; while the people nailed additional horse-shoes, rowan-twigs, and foxes' faces on their doors at night; and old wives pinned their stockings and garters cross-wise at their pillows to keep away evil. If the wind rumbled in the chimney, as it often did (for *lums* were of enormous size in those days), gudeman and gudewife trembled together in the secrecy of their snug box-beds; for they were assured it could be nothing else than the wolf bellowing at the sailing moon.

The wise men of St. Monan's kept their kirk-bell (which was thought to have miraculous powers) ringing all night to scare away the prowler; but this was soon likely to cause a rebellion among the Crail and Kinghorn fishermen, who declared that the noise would scare all the herrings from the coast.

Every night the wolf was heard roaring somewhere, and next morning the bones of children or sheep were found on the highways, picked as clean as ivory. Superstition increased the terrors of the people, who averred that it was visible in many places at once. It was said by some to be red, by others to be black; some declared its mouth was like that of a hound, others like that of

the great cannon, Meg of Threive, or as it is erroneously named, Mons Meg. It had the claws of an eagle, by one account; a barbed tail, by another; it vomited fire; it was a griffin; the devil—everything frightful that folly and fear could make it.

The best and bravest huntsmen had failed to slay or capture it; the sharpest spears had been blunted on its side, which the hereditary forester declared to be like a coat of mail; the fleetest dogs had been outrun by it, and the fiercest torn by its fangs when brought to bay; even Bash and Bawtry, the two great hounds of James V., on which Sir David of the Mount made many a witty rhyme, failed with this terrible wolf; and the unhappy Fifers were reduced to the verge of despair.

In the days of king James II. (A.D. 1457), a law ordained that for the destruction of wolves the sheriffs of counties and bailies of towns and regalties, were empowered to convene the men of their districts thrice yearly, "betwixt St. Mark's day and Lambmass, for that (saith the Act) is the time of the quhelpes;" and every huntsman who slew a wolf was to receive from each parishioner one penny; and whoever brought the wolf's head to the sheriff, lord, baron, or bailie, should receive six pennies.

Conformably to this law, passed eighty years before, and led in person by the gallant king (who was compelled for one day to leave his Magdalene's couch of sickness and of suffering), the whole male population of Fife, with horse and hound, spear and horn, bow and arquebuse, had made a vengeful and simultaneous search by hill and howe, by wood and wold, for this obnoxious denizen; but their efforts proved perfectly futile; and the night descended upon a hundred hunting bands,

without their having had even a glimpse of the enemy—at least so far as was known of those around the burgh of Kinghorn, where the earl had landed about noon that day ; for an adverse wind had long detained the little sloop which plied at that ancient ferry.

On disembarking, he repaired to an hostel house, which bore the sign of *The King's Horn*, for an old tradition asserts that as the earlier Scottish monarchs had a castle there, the frequent winding of the king's horn, as he sallied out to the chase, had given a name to the little town that nestled on the shore ; but the *cean-gorm*, or blue promontory of the Celtic Scots, still frowns above it, to contradict the tale. Then, as now, Kinghorn was a steep and straggling burgh of strange and quaint old houses, piled over each other, pell-mell on the brow of a hill, and was traversed by a brawling mountain burn, that turned the wooden wheel of many an ancient mill. It is overlooked by the lofty and rugged precipice, from the summit of which Alexander III., when riding from Inverkeithing to his castle of Kinghorn, having mistaken his path in the forest, fell and broke his neck ; a catastrophe which ended the old line of the Macalpine kings, and began the long wars and woes of the Scottish succession.

After a slight repast of cheese, bran-bannocks, and a draught of mumbeer, at the hostel, the earl became alarmed on discovering a proclamation, descriptive of his person, pasted on the wall immediately above his head. The unfortunate noble became still more apprehensive of suspicion or discovery, as the thirsty huntsmen who filled the burrow-toun came crowding into the hostel, and on perceiving that two or three were beginning to whisper and observe him, for his whole aspect was wild, haggard and disordered, he resolved, if questioned, to

pass for a forester like themselves, and, if attacked, to sell his life as dearly as possible.

Appropriating to himself a stout hunting spear which stood in a corner of the kitchen, he bade adieu to the sign of *The King's Horn*, and quitting the town, struck into the old horseway that traversed the heights overhanging the coast.

The sun was now setting.

Remembering how suspiciously he had been eyed in the little hostelry, he grasped the hunting spear, looked warily about him, and walked quickly to the eastward, anxious to leave Kinghorn as far as possible behind him.

The sun set darkly and lowering as he progressed, and the last flush of its light fell with a dusky yellow upon the long expanse of Kirkaldy sands, and the gigantic castle of Ravenscraig, with its round and square towers—a stronghold of the Sinclairs—which terminated them.

“I have neither money, food, nor shelter,” thought the earl; “but, praised be fortune, I am at least free!”

The wind growled along the hollows; the Firth grew black as ink, and its waves rolled white and frothy upon the circular sands, where more than one small vessel had dropped all her anchors, and made everything secure aloft and below, to brave the coming tempest. That vague and indescribable murmur, the sure forerunner of a rising storm, was floating over the dark green bosom of the German Sea, and he heard it mingling with the hiss of the breakers. A tempestuous night was at hand, and the hapless earl knew not where to look for refuge; the castle of Kirkaldy-grange, the dwelling of the lord high treasurer, crowned an eminence on his left; the fortlet of Seafield, where dwelt

the hostile race of Moultray (hostile, at least, to him), overlooked the beach on his right; so avoiding both, and the little fane called Eglise Marie, which then occupied the hollow between them, he descended the wild and then uncultivated shore, and skirting the long straggling town of Kirkaldy, hoped to find a shelter in one of those innumerable caverns with which, in many places, the coast of Fife is completely perforated.

The scudding clouds became blacker and denser; and their shadows darkened all the foam-flecked estuary. Night came rapidly on, and by the time when Lord Ashkirk had traversed the long and winding sands, and found himself near those stupendous cliffs which were crowned by the great castle of William Lord Sinclair, baron of Dysart and Ravenscraig, the most perfect gloom had enveloped both sea and shore, while the red and fiery glow of several salt-pans on the beach, imparted a singular effect to the scenery.

As yet no rain had fallen; but now one of those appalling gusts of wind which uproot the strongest trees, and lay bare the scalps of mountains, rushed along the bosom of the Forth, hurling its waves upon the beach, rolling them sea on sea far along the level sands, and pouring them in a whirlwind of spray against the grey and lofty summit of the Ravenscraig. Startled by the din of the encroaching waves, the earl, by a winding path, was rapidly ascending the headland, when a wild cry from the ocean—for there the river was indeed an ocean—made him pause and look back.

"Mother of Mercy!" he exclaimed, as he held his bonnet on his head, struck his spear in the earth, and turned to face the storm.

A terrific glare of lightning revealed for a moment the deep, dark trough of seething water, where, in

flames and fragments, as the levin brand had scorched and rent her, a strong and stately ship, with all her masts and yards, her gilded sides, and tier of cannon, sank down for ever! The vision came and went with that flash of forky light; and then no more was seen, and nothing more was heard but the thunder pealing away over the mountains, the roaring of the angry wind, and the deep boom of the angrier sea.

The earl looked wistfully at the vast and opaque outline of Ravenscraig, with its stupendous keep and flanking towers, amid whose stony depths many a warm red light twinkled, indicative of comfort within; but there an avowed foeman dwelt; and he passed the gate without knowing where other shelter might be found. He now became more anxious, for a few large and warm drops, which plashed upon his face, announced that a drenching summer thunder shower was about to fall.

He had now attained such high ground that even the turrets of Ravenscraig were below him, and the wind swept over it with redoubled force; for then the promontory was all desolate and bare, though in the Druid days a vast forest had covered it. Beneath him lay the little town of Dysart, a closely-packed and antique burgh, nestling on the steep and straggling shore, full of quaint old-fashioned houses, roofed with stone, and built upon broad and low arcades, where the merchants exposed their wares; but, save where a ray of light shone from an open shutter or an upper window, the whole town was buried in murky obscurity.

The roaring of the winds, and the din of the breakers against the promontory, prevented the earl hearing the sound of his own footsteps; and in the gloom he paused irresolutely on the brow of this rugged eminence, for

now the tall and beautiful tower of Saint Denis started up from amid the architectural masses of the Black Friary, and seemed to be immediately below his feet, yet it was fully a quarter of a mile distant.

He was about to descend and claim the shelter and sanctuary which the Dominican fathers were bound to afford him, for one night at least, when a wild and frightful cry, that was borne on the wind past his ear, made him pause once more, again grasp his hunting-spear, and gaze around him.

All was darkness and obscurity behind; no object met his eye save three large and beautiful oaks, which stood equidistant on the hill-side; and against the gloomy sky he saw their gloomier outline, twisted, torn, and shaken as if by the hand of a giant, and every moment their wet leaves were swept past him on the whirling blast.

These were *the three trees* of Dysart. The earl remembered the tradition concerning them, which, with the place, the time, and the cry, caused a clamorous terror to rise suddenly in his breast; for he was far from being free of the superstitions incident to the age and country.

When all that district was covered by an old primeval forest, three sons of Henry Lord Sinclair, who was baron of the Ravenscraig, and justiciar of Kirkwall, were said to have met on that spot unexpectedly, and at midnight. Being all in their armour, amid the obscurity of the foliage, and under a moonless and starless sky, they mistook each other for robbers, and a deadly combat ensued. Two were slain on the instant, and the third fell mortally wounded, surviving only till morning, when they were all buried at the foot of the trees below which they were found. And tradi-

tion further states, that when the forest was cleared away in course of time, these three oaks were left as a memorial, to mark the former state of the ground, and the place where the three brothers lay. Lord Sinclair fell at Flodden, fighting against the enemies of his country; prior to which he had granted many a Scottish merk to the monks of St. Denis, to say prayers and masses for the souls of the three fratricides, his sons.

The story came back to the earl's mind with all the additional impressions that the darkness of the night, the storm, and the time could lend it; and though the unearthly cry made his pulses pause, and his ears tingle, he was too brave a man to shun any object of terror; and drawing his bonnet well over his eyes, to prevent its being swept away by the furious blast, he turned back, and resolutely advanced to where the three tall oaks were tossing their solemn masses of foliage against the louring sky.

A dead man lay below each, and the long rank grass which covered him was whistling in the dreary wind.

"My God!—*the wolf!*" cried the earl, as a sudden gleam of lightning revealed to him the monster which so long had been the terror of Fife and Kinross. It was of gigantic size; but appalled by the fury of the elements, was cowering against the centre tree, gnashing its fangs, and darting fire from its eyes, with all the hair of its neck and back erect like the quills of a porcupine.

Aware that unless he slew it with the first thrust of his spear all in a moment would be over with him, the brave young noble charged his weapon breast high, and rushed upon the wolf. With a ferocious howl it sprang aside; the weapon struck the trunk of the tree, broke,

and the earl fell headlong among the wet grass of the grave below it. Then, with the rapidity of light, the frightful animal was upon him. There was a cloud of fire before his eyes, and a wild humming in his ears; but neither the stunning fall, nor the terror of having such an antagonist, appalled him so much as to deprive him of his usual presence of mind, for at the very moment in which it sprang upon him, and when he felt its sharp claws in his shoulders, and its hot fetid breath in his face, he buried his dagger—that long dagger, so recently wet with the blood of Redhall—in its body up to the very hilt; and then its hotter blood came like a deluge over his hand and arm.

A vital part had been struck, and the wolf rolled over, tearing the grass with its teeth, and wallowing in its blood. Then, full of rage for the temporary terror with which it had inspired him, the fierce earl sprang upon it, and buried his sharp dagger again and again to the cross-guard in its body, though he received more than one terrible laceration from its claws, as the agonies of death alternately convulsed and relaxed them. - Clutching its lower jaw by the shaggy fur, with three deep gashes he completely shred off its head, and then reclined breathlessly against the tree.

“Well, and so I have conquered thee!” he exclaimed, triumphantly, as he spurned the carcase with his foot. “Devilish monster, to me thy head is worth a penny from every man in Dysart—a goodly sum for an earl, forsooth! But as I lack these pennies sorely to pay my way to England, to the Highlands, or elsewhere, I will even seek the prior of St. Denis with my prize, midnight though it be.”

Tying the four corners of his mantle together, he put the head into it, and arming himself with a fragment of

his spear, descended to the gate of the Black Friary ; but, as the wind still blew, the rain lashed the stone walls and grated windows, while the sea boomed on the rocks below, and the worthy master porter slept like a dormouse, the din made by the earl at the door was unheard.

"The great devil confound thee !" he muttered, turning away ; "for I must even go without my pence and my supper to boot."

Remembering his first project of the caverns, he scrambled along the rocky and shingly beach for more than two miles, until a ray of light, which streamed from a fissure in the bluffs, far across the wet sands and tumbling billows, attracted his attention.

Turning to the left, he approached it—the fissure widened, and entering boldly, he found himself in one of those long and deep weems, or caverns, which are there so numerous ; and immediately a band of outlaws and smugglers surrounded him.

CHAPTER V.

THE WEEM.

“Blow ye horns
And rouse each wilder passion of the soul,
To drown the voice of Nature! He must die!
He who puts forth his hand to seize a crown
Must stake his all upon the mighty game.”

KÖRNER'S *Expiation, a Drama.*

“Ого! here cometh *another* guest, whom the high wind hath blown us this eerie night!” cried one of the occupants of the weem, as the whole party arose and stood around the intruder.

Tall, strong, armed with a broken spear, smeared with mud from the paws of the wolf, and covered with gouts of its blood, which hung upon his matted hair and bushy beard, the aspect of the earl was sufficiently formidable to command the respect of the desperadoes among whom he had intruded; and, at a wave of his right hand and arm—the latter being drenched in blood to the elbow—they all shrunk back instinctively and grasped their clubs and poniards.

The enormous weem he had entered was one of those caverns from which a part of the coast obtains its name—Wemyss; and though the outer part of it was brilliantly illuminated by a fire of drift wood and pine-logs

that blazed on the rocky floor, on progressing, the earl was impressed with a feeling of awe by the uncertainty of the vast profundity to which it penetrated; for the inner end of this frightful chasm or fissure yawned away obscurely and horribly into the bowels of the earth. It had, doubtless, been formed, like many others along the rocky coast, by that wondrous upheaval of the Scottish shores, which geologists suppose must have taken place some two thousand years ago, or when the sea receded thirty feet from its ancient margin, which to this day is visible along the summits of all the headlands in Fife-shire and Lothian.

Though several culinary utensils, Dutch kegs, and tubs were placed in little cupboard-like recesses, the cavern did not seem to have been long occupied by its tenants, who were six in number, strong and muscular men, whose long matted beards flowed nearly to their girdles; and whose attire declared them to be partly beggars, partly robbers, and wholly desperadoes. That they lived at enmity with their fellow-subjects was apparent from the multiplicity and aspect of the swords, poniards, and pole-axes with which they were armed.

The earl found, when too late, that he had made an unfortunate choice of hosts, when such a price was on his head, but grasping his broken spear with one hand, and his gory bundle by the other, he confronted them resolutely.

"Now, who are you?" asked one who seemed to be the leader.

"It matters nothing to thee, thou dour carle, so lay down thy maul, or beware!" replied the earl.

"Then, what are you?"

"A gaberlunzie—a beggar!" said Ashkirk, bitterly.

"Then, where is thy parish token?"

"I spoke but metaphorically, for I have not yet taken me unto *that* trade; and when I do, I will see king James at Jericho, and his parliament too, before I will sew a pewter badge on my doublet, tattered though it be. I will not conform to this new law, believe me, brother rogue. But I repeat, nevertheless, that I *am* a beggar, because I seek food without having the wherewithal to pay for it; and, moreover, that I am, like thyself, an outlaw.

"Gude and better!" replied the other; "but there is blood on thy sleeve; why man, thou art *red handed*!"

"Blood! true—I shed a little in my own defence, and what then? I have committed no murder. Believe me, fellow, there is more blood on thy soul than on my fingers. But, enough of this. I seek what every man who hath them not hath a right to seek from those who hath—food, fire, and shelter.

"What is this in your cloak?"

"Something that thou hast no concern with."

"We will soon see that," cried several, laying hands on their knives and daggers.

"If thou darest!" replied the earl, raising his truncheon, and confronting the strongest and the boldest.

"Byde and haud ye! Nay, nay," cried the others, laughing; "honour among thieves. Hath he not said that, like oursels, he is an outlaw? besides, ye will waken that chield in the corner."

"Sit down again, you quarrelsome loons," said the leader; "and seat thyself too, my bold gaberlunzie, with a welcome to bite and to bicker."

As the earl seated himself, carefully placing his bundle behind him, he now for the first time perceived a cavalier,

in a rich velvet mantle, lying asleep in a nook of the weem, which sheltered him both from the night wind, that blew the smoke and brands of the fire into the recesses of the rocks, and from the damp atmosphere of the sea, which burst like thunder every moment on the adjacent beach. The boots of the sleeper were of spotless white leather, adorned with spurs of gold, polished and richly chased, with rowels of glittering steel. Beside him lay his sword, which was sheathed in blue and embroidered velvet.

"Who may this gay gallant be?" asked the earl, as he warmed his hands, and, making himself quite at home, kicked up the brands to make a blaze.

"One of our king's dainty courtiers," replied the principal ruffian; a patch over whose left eye, nearly concealed the little of his frightful visage which was not overgrown with hair. "St. Mary! thou mayest see he is Falkland bred, by those cork-heeled boots and gowden spurs. There hath been a brave hunt after the wolf of Pittencrief, and all the court and countryside have driven horse and hound nearly to death, without getting even sight or scent of the monster; so either the wind, the storm, or the darkness of the night, his evil chance, or our good luck, hath brought this gay galliard hither for a shelter and supper, which," he added, sinking his voice, "both his cloak and purse——"

"Breeches and doublet," said another, in the same whispering tone——"

"With his horse, which we have stabled in yonder hole——"

"Yea," chimed in the earl, "and those dainty boots and spurs, shall pay for. Is it not so?"

"Right—we'll all have a share!" and here the six

uttered a brutal laugh, and all exchanged glances and winks expressive of fun and ferocity.

"Meantime," said the leader, "waken up his worship, for supper is ready."

Here one pulled the wearied cavalier by the cloak. He started up, and revealed a handsome young face, aquiline features and dark hazel eyes, close clipped beard and dark moustache. He wore (very much on the right side) a smart blue bonnet, with a white feather springing from a diamond St. Andrew's cross.

"Mercy ! *the king !*" said the earl, in the inmost recesses of his heart, as he respectfully gave place at the fire to the gallant and adventurous James V., who had not the most remote idea that he was recognised by any one there, and passed for nothing more than a private gentleman ; the whole adventure being one of that romantic kind in which he—our Scottish Haroun Alraschid—delighted. Before seating himself on the stone which was to be his chair, he signed the cross upon his breast and said : "*Benedicite.*"

A mess of rabbits and fowls stewed together in a kailpot, another of broiled fish, with cheese and bannocks, which, like the small kegs of ale and usquebaugh, had merely cost the trouble of carrying them off (at a time when the burgh-merchants had no other police than their own eyes and hands), were freely shared by the thieves with their illustrious guests, one of whom they had foredoomed to death. The other, they deemed already as one of themselves ; for the earl, the better to conceal his real character, assumed a strange dialect, and talked, laughed, sung and swore, till he drew upon him the marked attention of the king ; but under that matted beard and tattered attire, disfigured by many a

gout of blood, the monarch failed to recognise the outlawed noble.

With a hunting clasp-knife, one of those made and inscribed by Jacques de Liege (whence comes our Scottish *Jockteleg*), the king was carving for himself a chicken which he had laid on a broad bannock, and was evidently enjoying the repast like a huntsman and soldier, for he was both.

"By my faith! knave of the pot," said he to the robber who had cooked, "thou hast done thy duty well."

"Ouaye; we fisher chields can turn our hands to anything,"

"Then turn them to mending the fire; for dost thou not see 'tis all gone to cinders?"

"As we shall when we gang to auld Cloutie," replied the cook, whose reply was greeted by a roar of laughter, the echoes of which seemed to rumble away into the heart of the rocks.

"Friend Bloodybeard," said the king to the earl, "hand over that keg of usquebaugh; wilt drink with me? thy health, friend Bloodybeard."

"Thine, my gentleman of the white feather."

"How gallantly thou drainest thy bicker!" said the king, on seeing how the earl emptied his tass of raw spirits; "didst thou ever taste pure water, fellow?"

"Once, when an infant; but, as it nearly choked me, I have never tried it since. Tush! wine costs us no more than spring water. Like James and his courtiers of Arran, we help ourselves to our neighbours' goods and gear, whenever we lack."

The broad brow of the king knit, but he laughed, and said—

"Have the courtiers not wealth enough and to spare, sirrah?"

"Wealth—ah, that is the greatest and most respected quality in man."

"But beside wealth, hath not king James many virtues?"

"Tut! these are but a silly habit of differing from such merry men as we; but I fear me we scare thee, my dainty gentleman, by the din we are making."

"By my word, no; I should like to see the men who would scare me," replied the king, fishing another pullet out of the pot; "I am but fulfilling the injunction of the great Plato, who said, 'live with thine inferiors as with unfortunate friends.' Ho! by St. Anne, Bloodybeard, knock the bottoms out of these broiled eggs, or all the Fife witches will be sailing over to Lothian in them; dost hear me? quick, or I shall report thee to the cardinal and his grand inquisitor."

"The inquisitor—faugh! he is but a Hamilton," said the earl, who could not jest with the names of his enemies; "and as for the cardinal, I say, bah! he is a mere cannoneer in canonicals—a devil in a broad red hat."

"Beware how ye get under its shadow, my fool-hardy knaves," said the king, laughing. "Have you looked well to my horse?"

"Yea, sir, as a man looketh after his *own*," replied one fellow, whose ears bore visible marks of the nails which so frequently had fastened them to many a burgh cross; and at his significant reply there was uttered another of those low, ferocious laughs, which soon served to put the unwary monarch on his guard; for, like each of his forefathers, James V. was brave as a lion.

"My gallant grey!" said he; "'tis a gift to me from the Laird of Largo, who took him from the Lord Cassilis at Linlithgow bridge, on the day of that unhappy battle. I have ridden him forty miles to-day, —not a rood less, I am sure."

"After such sore toil," said the earl; "his nostrils should be bathed with vinegar, and his breast with warm wine."

"Oho! thou knowest something of stablecraft, my smuggler, it would seem."

"Few in broad Scotland know better."

"And now I have supped right gloriously!" said the king reclining back against the great cyclopean wall of the weem. "Friend robber, thy crail capons and stewed pullets have been done in such wise, that even king James' cook might envy thy skill; and in England, I doubt not, Henry the king would have made thee a belted earl; for he hath just made a baron of his cook for the exquisite manner in which he broiled a mackarel —at least so my friend the English ambassador said to-day, as we rode together near the old castle of Balwearie. Hand over that keg again, Bloodybeard," said the king, and, on receiving it, he began to sing a popular ditty of the day:—

"King James rode round by the Mere-cleugh-heid,
Booted and spurred as we a' did see;
But he dined and supped at Mossfennan yett,
Wi' the bonny young Lass o' the Loganlee.

"Her hair was like the gowd sae braw,
Like a lammer bead, her deep dark e'e,
Nor Falkland tower, nor Lithgow ha',
Had a dame like the Lass o' the Loganlee.

“ ‘Oh, where is the king?’ quoth all the court,
From the great cardinal to the fool, M’Ilree;
But the devil a one knew where he was gone,
With the bonnie young Lass o’ the Loganlee.”

Here the merry king lay back and laughed excessively at this hunting song, which had been composed on one of his own amorous adventures.

By this time the thieves had drunk deeply, but their hilarity began to subside, and their ferocious glances warned their guest that something unpleasant was about to terminate the noisy repast. Under his mantle the king felt secretly for his sword, and grew pale as death on discovering that, either by accident or design, when he was asleep, the blade had been broken in the sheath—leaving him defenceless, with seven armed outlaws, in a lonely cavern. He was in the very act of looking hurriedly round for some other weapon to snatch up in case of need, when lo! one of the ruffians held before him a plate, whereon (according to an ancient and barbarous custom) lay two naked poniards, as a signal that he was to be sacrificed, and might choose with which blade he was to die.

Instead, as they expected, of being appalled, with the rapidity of lightning the gallant king clutched one in each hand, and striking to the right and to the left, buried both weapons in the breasts of the ruffians next him.

“Dogs and villains!” he exclaimed, “slipper-helmetted dastards! come on, if you dare!”

Armed with mauls and axes, the other four fell furiously upon him, and he must inevitably have been slain, had not the earl, with the truncheon of his spear in one hand, and a burning brand in the other, attacked

them in the rear, and with such impetuosity that, by two blows, he broke the arm of one, the head of a second, and drove the whole from the cavern. Thus, in less than one minute, the king and he found themselves, with two dead bodies, the sole occupants of the place.

"Well done, friend Bloodybeard!" exclaimed the breathless king; "by my soul, I thought thee one of them; and well it is for me thou didst strike in such good time. Complete me now thy service by cutting out the tongues of these two carrion, that I may give them to my hounds," he added, kicking the dead bodies, and untying his purse from his girdle. "I have here only twenty French crowns, but if thou wilt come to Falkland to-morrow, and ask for—for——"

"His majesty the king," replied the earl, whose eye moistened, and whose heart swelled, as (instead of kneeling) he drew himself proudly up to his full height; "replace your purse, James Stuart; surely Archibald Earl of Ashkirk hath not sunk so far as to be paid thus for fighting in the service of his king."

"Ashkirk!" said king James, less astonished that he was recognised than at this rencontre and discovery. "Ashkirk, is it indeed thee, thou traitor and son of a traitress?"

"I am no traitor, neither am I the son of a traitress; but an outlaw, certainly; and why? Because I am the hereditary foeman of the house of Hamilton. False king, thou wrongest me sorely, by such epithets as these."

"*Thou*, Ashkirk? it is impossible!" said James, filled with pity at the deplorable aspect of his long-dreaded rebel.

"Look at me, king? My years are not yet thirty,

and my brow is wrinkled ; for the hand of a tyrant, less than time, hath touched it."

"A tyrant ?

"Thou !"

"Darest thou say so to my teeth ?"

"Ay, thou—James V. ; for thou wagest the quarrels and the feuds of the fathers upon their children. By war and death thou dost ; revengefully and remorselessly. Thou hast put a price upon my head, and hunted me, even as a wild beast, from place to place. But think not that I will ever sue for pardon ; I will live as my fathers have lived, or die, sword in hand, as my fathers have died. Never shalt thou see a Seton of Ashkirk among those fawning slaves of the house of Arran, who, watching for every passing smile, crowd round thy throne like sycophants—never ! never !"

"This to me !" cried the king, snatching up a sword ; "to me from thee, thou parricide, who hast carried fire and sword into the heart of thy fatherland ! Must I tell thee, false earl, that, in addition to thy rebellion, all assurance and friendship with Englishmen *is treason* ; that the residence of a Scot in England *is treason* ; that buying from or selling to Englishmen *is treason* ; that all travelling or trafficking with Englishmen, by word or writing, *is treason* ; incurring the penalties of proscription and death ! Not content with the committal of all these crimes, and with levying war against our wardens with lances uplifted and banner displayed, I find thee, the boon-companion of thieves and outlaws, who live by slaughter and robbery ; by stealing pikes from ponds ; by breaking dower-cots and orchards ; by lifting sheep and slaying parked deer ; all contraventions of the laws passed by my father, James IV., for

the security of property ; and involving the penalty of the scourge."

"The scourge!" reiterated the earl, with a bitter laugh; "I can respect the name of James IV., for he was my father's friend, and side by side they often fought like two brave comrades; but thou, his son, the ruthless oppressor of the bravest nobles Scotland ever saw—who hast thrown the sceptre into the scales that justice might be overborne, never! The scourge? I am indeed degraded, when even a king dare mention it to me. Proud and ungrateful prince, hast thou, indeed, forgotten all that thou and thy forefathers owe to the houses of Seton and of Douglas?"

"I have not," said the king, standing on his guard; "it is, indeed, a debt of vengeance, so take up a sword and come on. Here, man to man, I defy thee, and repay it."

"Nay, nay; it shall never be said that the royal blood of Scotland stained the hand of Seton. Ten minutes ago I might have slain thee in the *mêlée*, and there had ended thy Stuart line for ever."

"To place thy feudal foe of Arran on the throne—eh? That would not have mended matters with thee and Angus, I think. But what does royal blood signify? Art thou not at this moment covered with the blood of my subjects? Just now, earl, I tell thee, thou hast all the aspect of a gory murderer."

"Then, behold the head of my victim!" said the noble, as from his mantle he rolled at the king's feet the enormous and grisly head of the wolf. "Behold that *other* head, on which, as on mine, your majesty has placed a golden price."

Admiration flashed in the eyes of James V.; he threw away his sword, and took the earl's hands in his.

"Oh, Ashkirk, Ashkirk! thou triest me sorely; oh, why art thou not my friend?—but it cannot be; for thy wrongs against thy country, its parliament and crown, are too deep to be easily forgiven. For the gallant deeds of this night, I feel that I could forgive them all; but what would my people say, and what my peers Cathcart and Lennox, Darnley, Hailes, Lyle, and Lorn,—all of whom are hostile to thy house? Besides, I have sworn—solemnly and irrevocably sworn never to forgive the crime of man or of woman, in whose veins there is one drop of the Douglas blood; and too surely, at this hour, at my own hearth and home, I feel that thy mother and thy sister are Douglases. My poor Magdalene!—Lord earl, thy crimes I might afford to forgive freely, for they are only those of a rash and headstrong Scot; but the other crimes of thy family never—never!"

And here, stung deeply by the thought of that supposed sorcery which was bringing his queen to the grave, James paused, and pressed his hands upon his brow; and the earl, who was ignorant of what he referred to, remained silent and perplexed.

"Still I could forgive thee, for the memory of my father's friend, Earl John,—that arm of steel and heart of fire—but my vow!—it cannot be. Here let us part; go on, pursue thy wandering way, unfriended and unhappy lord, and may Heaven keep thee! Here, take these thirty crowns from me,—*not* as the price of this wolf's head, which I will bear with me to Falkland, with the story of thy prowess, to shame my carpet knights, but as that gift, such as one friend—one gentleman may freely bestow or freely accept from another. There are proclamations for thine apprehension posted on every city cross, on every burgh-barrier

and Tolbooth gate, throughout the length and breadth of the land; if thou escapest, I will rejoice; and if thou art taken, I will sorrow; for, by my father's soul, I must then behead thee before the gates of Stirling. So away! to France, to Flanders, to Italy—anywhere but England, the land of our enemies; and may the blessed God grant that we shall never meet again.—Farewell!”

And leading forth his horse, for the storm had now died away, and the early sun of June had risen, the king put his foot in the stirrup, saying,—

“My adventures are wild and strange; and assuredly, if ever old Scotland hath a Plutarch, James V. will live in his pages. Adieu!” and with these words, placing the wolf's head at his saddle-bow, the king put spurs to his grey horse, and galloping along the sandy beach, rode over the adjacent hill in the direction of Falkland, which lay on his road to the Cistercian Abbey of Balmerino.

The earl stood near the mouth of the cavern on the desolate beach, and gazed after the king's retiring figure, with mingled feelings of sadness, hostility, and admiration. Then, after long musing and much hesitation, he took up the purse of crowns which lay at his feet, and kissing his hand towards the castle of the Inch—the prison of Sybil Douglas and his mother—walked slowly and thoughtfully along the beach.

The storm had completely lulled. The sea was mirrored around the rocks and isles; the sky was blue and cloudless. The chafing waves broke with a dreamy ripple on the yellow sands. The green headlands and bold promontories, the rustic villages and quaint old fisher-towns that nestled between them, were all shining in the silvery haze of that beautiful summer morning; but the soul of the young earl was sad.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEATH OF MAGDALENE.

"Envy and calumny will destroy innocence and pleasure; the oppressed will be sacrificed to the oppressor; and, in proportion as tyranny makes kings distrustful, judicial murders will depopulate the state."

Telemachus, Book XX.

DURING these passages the young queen Magdalene had daily become worse, and the "catarrh which descended into her stomach," as Madame de Montreuil says in one of her letters, had brought her to the verge of the grave.

The sorrow and alarm of James were great; and remorsefully he now remembered the warnings of Francis I., contrary to whose most urgent advice he had espoused her, instead of the blooming Mary of Lorraine. Foreign physicians were sent by their kings from distant courts and cities, even from Syria and the remote countries of the east, and daily they crowded the antechamber with their long beards and longer garments, their grave visages and solemn quackeries; but their presence had no other effect than to bring lower and lower the health of poor Magdalene; and to excite the wrath and jealousy of John of the Silver-mills, who (as the king's apothecary, and deacon of the

barber-chirurgeons of Edinburgh), by the presence of these strangers, felt his dignity encroached upon, and his reputation impugned.

The love of the amiable French girl for her gallant young husband was excessive; it strengthened as her strength decayed; and finding that matters of state separated them long and frequently, contrary to all advice, she left Balmerino, with its shady woods and mellow air; and to be near her beloved James V., returned to the grey and solemn courts of Holyrood on the eighth day of June.

There, to the joy of her husband, she seemed to revive a little; and the preparations for her coronation (which was to be on a scale of magnificence hitherto unknown in Scotland) had been resumed with renewed vigour; but alas! on the tenth of July, three days after the arrest of Lady Jane Seton, she suddenly threw up her hands to heaven and expired, at a moment when, stooping over her couch, the king, her husband, was playfully caressing and conversing with her; and the great solemn bells of St. Giles, and those of the Abbey Church, the Dominicans, the Cistercians, and other friaries, as slowly and sadly they tolled a knell, warning all good people to pray for the passing soul, announced that direful event which plunged the whole land in sorrow; for James V., "the king of the poor," was really a monarch who reigned in the hearts of a people who were then loyal and generous as they were brave.

She was solemnly interred by torchlight in the royal vault at Holyrood; and in her strong prison Jane Seton heard the deep hoarse boom of the minute guns, as they broke upon the still midnight sky from the Towers of

King David, St. Margaret, and the ramparts of that stately fortress which enclosed her.

So great was the grief of the nation, that this was the first occasion of a general mourning in Scotland; and in the accounts of the lord high treasurer there are still preserved numerous entries of the Scottish and Holland cloths, French blacks, white crosses upon sable velvets, and many other articles for the court, together with the expenses of Magdalene's magnificent obsequies, the dirges sung, and solemn masses said, on that melancholy event, which became the all-absorbing topic of the time.

The whole nation mourned with the king; and everywhere, at kirk or market, on highway or in burgh-town, black cloaks and sable feathers had replaced the gaudier colours and fashions of the age. A great funeral escutcheon hung in each of the eight cathedrals, and over the gates of all the royal palaces. Like those used in France and Germany they were lozenge formed, bearing the royal arms of Scotland on a black ground, surrounded by those of the sixteen families from whom the queen was descended. At the four corners were placed (as usual among us at the present day) mort-heads, and the black interstices were *semée* with powdered tears.

After the funeral, king James, with a small retinue, retired to the solitude of his beautiful country palace at Falkland.

If the hidden cause of the queen's illness had puzzled the learned physicians and astrologers who had gathered around her couch, as it were, from the four winds of heaven, it occasioned still greater speculation among the superstitious people of Scotland, and a universal whisper

of *sorcery*, followed by a cry for vengeance on the cause of effect so dire, went throughout the land, from the Caledonian to the German sea.

Fettered to a sick bed, suffering under the extremes of mental and bodily agony—the double wounds, received first from Roland Vipont, and secondly from the earl, all combined, and acting upon a frame weakened by a previous illness, had brought Sir Adam Otterburn to the brink of the grave.

His hours of delirium were full of visions either of love and delight—of Jane Seton, and a successful suit, or of sanguinary horror; of conflicts, tortures and executions; while the hours of comparative calm that succeeded—the mere result of utter exhaustion—were occupied by deep laid schemes of avenging himself upon the authors of so many miseries.

His mind had now but two thoughts—a delirium of love and a delirium of hate; and they corroded his heart between them.

He had cast off Jane Seton; for so he strove to think, and so, unto himself, he said a thousand times; he had rent her from his heart, and abandoned her to the terrors in store for her. Then love would come again, and he strove wildly to stifle it like a rising flame; for he had given the first impulse to the ball of fate, and he resolved to let it roll on its course to destruction.

In his moments of calm agony, when every voice in his heart was still but those which whispered of jealousy and revenge, he deliberately dictated, and drew up with bitter care, certain articles of accusation, implicating Jane Seton wholly and solely in the death of the queen, by sorcery of the most malignant character; and armed by a warrant, the town mansion of the Ashkirk family, which had not been opened since the Albany herald,

John Hamilton of Darnagaber, had placed his seal on every door and lockfast place thereof, was opened, and searched by that unwilling functionary, and the witchfinder, Nichol Birrel.

After the dose he had been compelled to swallow at Cairntable, the latter, it may be supposed, had reached Edinburgh with considerable difficulty; and, like his master, animated by personal and implacable vengeance against Sir Roland Vipont, he entered with heart and soul into the public prosecution. Thus, when by order of his lord and patron, Redhall, he was searching the house of the Setons, he contrived most opportunely to discover in the boudoir of Lady Jane a little wooden image bearing a crown, and marked with the initials M. B. It was stuck full of pins, and was partly scorched by fire; but after being duly sprinkled with holy water, and exorcised by the late queen's French confessor, was deposited in the hands of the lord advocate, who sealed it up in a box marked with the cross, as being the most tremendous and damning proof of guilt that had ever come under the notice of the newly constituted college of justice.

With one voice the whole city now accused, and without a moment's hesitation, condemned Jane Seton. The preparations for her trial went on rapidly; and the king, who was absorbed in his own grief, and remained secluded among the woods of Falkland, abandoned her to her fate; but the wretched Redhall suffered more than either the hapless Jane or the bereaved king, for remorse grew side by side with his anger.

Those sentiments of generosity, of pity, and of lingering love, which ever and anon dawned in the arid desert of his heart, and impelled him to free her, to sue for pardon, or to fly his country, were invariably stifled

under a torrent of jealousy and hate, when he thought of Roland Vipont; and then his half-healed wounds would sting him anew, as if probed by poniards; the perspiration would burst from his temples, and he writhed on his sick bed in an agony indescribable.

"She is indeed a sorceress!" he would exclaim; upon which his nurse and housekeeper, an old and wrinkled dame who attended him, and who never left his bedside, would make signs of the cross, and feel for the reliques which were sewed in the lining of her long piked stays, which, with her ruff and coif, made her resemble those quaint figures which still live in the pictures of Holbein.

Credulity has existed in every age of the world; and thus chiromancy, astrology, physiognomy, and the wildest theories of abstruse science, have risen and flourished on the ignorance and folly of the human mind; but there were none that equalled the *witchmania*, which, strange to say, grew in Scotland, and flourished side by side with religious freedom and reform.

It is a curious fact, that before the epoch of Knox sorcery was almost unknown among us. In our earliest record of criminal trials, that comprehending the years 1493—1504, there is not one prosecution for sorcery. In the days of James V. it began to be much spoken of, and rapidly became a source of terror. Lady Jane's was nearly the first indictment; but the earliest statute against it was passed in 1563, by the first reformed parliament, and that portion of the law which refers to consultations "with sorcerers and witches" was not enacted until 1594—fully thirty years after the Reformation had been established by the law of Scotland.

Then, indeed, from that period, kirk sessions and presbyteries, ministers, elders, sheriffs, and justiciars, went

with heart and hand into the matter ; for in the *witchmania*, that atrocious madness which spread over Europe, though Scotland was the last to catch the contagion, she was in no way behind neighbouring countries in the cruelty of her prosecutions.

According to Barrington, thirty thousand witches were burned in England, five hundred perished in three months at Geneva, and a thousand at Como in one year. The number committed to the flames in Scotland is incalculable, but no less than six hundred witches were indicted during the sitting of one parliament at Edinburgh. Suspicion, abhorrence, accusation, trial, and death, followed each other with appalling rapidity.

Thus we find in history, that the savage spirit of ignorance and credulity which impelled the great Cardinal Beaton to burn six men at the stake, on the charge of heresy, was out-Heroded by the still greater ignorance and credulity of his successors, who, for each of these six, sacrificed more than thousands for the imaginary crime of witchcraft.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COLLEGE OF JUSTICE.

"No! in an accursed spot—our magic tree,
Where devils from of yore their sabbath keep—
Has all this been contrived; there did she sell
Her soul to the eternal fiend, to be
With brief vain glory honoured in this world.
Bid her stretch forth her arm, and ye will see
The puncture, by which hell hath marked its own."
SCHILLER'S *Maid of Orleans*.

THE summer solstice was passed.

Heavily and louringly the 15th of July dawned over Edinburgh; and one hour after the portes were unclosed, the Right Honourable Knight, Sir Simon Preston of Craigmillar, the new Lord Provost of the city and Admiral of the Forth, entered by the Kirk-of-field Wynd, sheathed in full armour, with a party of horse; when, conform to the orders of his eminence the cardinal, John Muckleheid, senior bailie, joined him with three hundred archers—the same burgher-archers who had lined the streets exactly two months before, on the entrance of queen Magdalene.

A tumult was expected; very few merchants or chapmen opened their booths on this morning; and those between the Bell-house and the Tron remained

closed. Sir John Forrester's guards were doubled at the palace, the mint, the castle-gate, and elsewhere; and after arming themselves with more than usual care, vast crowds of burghers poured towards the Exchequer Chambers, or '*Checquer Chalmers*, as they then named them. The stacks of heather, broom, whins, and of other fuel, which were then permitted to encumber the street, either as being the property of householders, or for sale, bore each on their summit a load of urchins, whose yells and outcries served to increase the general clamour.

A flag was flying on the steeple of the Tolbooth, which had been built fifty years before, by John Mercer, master mason; and thirteen shops (formed at the same period), in the vaults below the edifice, remained closed and barricaded.

The respect his garb ensured him, and the liberal manner in which he said "*Pax vobiscum*" to all, enabled the anxious and excited Father St. Bernard, on leaving his dormitory in the house of the prebendaries, to force a passage through the dense crowd which occupied the High-street, around the Exchequer, the Tolbooth, and Council-house, spreading even down the steep churchyard of St. Giles.

The provost's kinsman, Sir Andrew Preston, of Quhitehill and Gourtown, with a squadron of horsemen, overawed the crowd. Clad in a suit of rich armour he rode up and down the thoroughfare with his long lance, ordering and threatening some, or courteously giving admittance to others. The priest procured a place within the large hall of the Exchequer, where, for some reason now unknown, the trial of his unhappy penitent was to take place. A strong guard of archers occupied the hall-door and the turnpike stair below,

permitting none to enter without the closest scrutiny, lest armed Setons or Douglasses might penetrate into the heart of the place; for rumours of rescue were abroad in the city.

Roofed with beams of oak, painted and gilded, the hall was lighted by two rows of windows, lozenged and stained with brilliant coats of arms. Those on the east faced the dark buildings of a narrow close; those on the west overlooked the churchyard of St. Giles; thus, as the sun could not (until mid-day) penetrate its recesses, the light within the hall, at the early hour of eight, when the court began to assemble, was of the most subdued and sombre kind.

At the upper end were fifteen chairs, behind a bench, all covered with scarlet cloth, whereon sat Walter Mylne, abbot of Cambuskenneth, lord president of the recently instituted, and then eminently obnoxious court of judicature, with his fourteen lords,—viz., the abbot of Kinloss, the rector of Ashkirk, the provosts of Dunglass and of the Holy Trinity; the deans of Brechin, Restalrig, and Dunbar, who sat on his right hand; while the remaining seven, who were laymen—the knights of Balwearie, Lundie, Easter-Wemyss, Oxengangs, and of the Highriggs, Sir Francis Bothwell, and Otterburn of Auldham (a cousin of Redhall)—sat upon his left. These were the first fifteen senators of the College of Justice in Scotland; and, save the churchmen, few of them could sign their names. They were all men advanced in life; and, with their black caps and scarlet gowns, looked grimly over the half circular bench, which was raised on a dais several feet above the floor of the hall.

Headed by Lord David Hamilton (a son of the Earl of Arran), their chancellor, or, as we would now term

him, their foreman, the jury, which was principally composed of Hamiltons, occupied a recess on one side of the hall; while the ten advocates, in gowns of Paris black, with a number of sworn notaries, had the privilege of occupying the other. A tall wax candle, painted over with religious emblems, burned on the right hand of the president; and coldly its light fell upon his pinched and stern features and the gold crucifix which glittered upon his breast.

Before him, on one hand, was a table where the clerks of court sat, intrenched up to their ears in papers; on the other stood an uncouth machine, covered by a black cloth. There was something in its aspect that made the blood run cold: it was the rack, with other instruments of torture. They were then in full use by the new court, but were last applied in Edinburgh by order of William III., whom the Scottish people will ever remember as the assassin-king—the butcher of Glencoe.

Near this, in a large arm chair, hidden from the view of all save the lords, sat Redhall, buried in thought.

Macers in black gowns, and archers in steel caps, were visible here and there; but everywhere behind the bar was a dense crowd, whose heads were overlooking each other in close rows, like piles of cannon-shot. The whole court sat in the form of a horse-shoe; and every lord's mouth, and every juryman's too, bore some resemblance to the same figure; for gloom, anger, and severity, were impressed upon them all.

The bar enclosed the ends of this great horse-shoe; and there, between two arquebusiers of the king's guard, sat Lady Jane Seton.

Destitute of every ornament save an amber rosary, she

was plainly attired in a deep-skirted and close-bodied dress of blue silk, with hanging sleeves, each of which, from the elbow, had three rows of broad lace; and beneath these, from elbow to wrist, her round white arms were bare. A simple triangular cap, of that graceful fashion which we see in the old portraits of Anne Boleyn, covered her head. She was pale as death, and the plain braids of her dark, almost black-brown hair, made her seem paler still. She had become fearfully thin and hollow cheeked, but the character of her beauty was rather increased than impaired by this attenuation.

There was an expression of intense sadness in her quiet and limpid eye, and of sorrow on her lip; but there were times when her eyes flashed, and her lip quivered with surprise and contempt, or a cloud of horror would descend upon her brow at the various proceedings of this new court, and the bitter humiliation to which it subjected her. But now, nearly broken in spirit, crushed, and feeling that she was for ever degraded by the frightful accusation brought against her, in general she was careless of what was done, or said, or thought of her.

There was something antique in her beauty; but nothing could be softer, purer, or more delicate than its aspect.

In silence she heard the low muttered revilings and exclamations around her; when harassed by the stern questions of the hard-hearted and the credulous, or confounded by their energy and ferocity, their determination and their sophistry, she became utterly silent, and sought to bend all her thoughts on inward prayer.

A maze was before her eyes, and amid that maze

were fifteen scarlet spots, her fifteen judges; a confused murmur was in her ears, but amid that murmur she could hear the beating of her own heart. In its inner recesses there was but one thought—*Roland*; and her heart only shrunk when her chain rattled; for they had chained her.

She was a witch!

Many a familiar face was in the crowd, yet not one deigned to look on her with kindness or with friendship. The terrible accusation had frozen the hearts of all; thus she saw less perhaps of sorrow than of indignation in every face; while, generally, a silence the most profound reigned throughout the whole assembly.

In Scotland trials for sorcery were mere formalities; the same blind terror and insane credulity which brought forward the accusation and hurried on the decision, led at once to the frightful condemnation. When first indicted, Jane had some hope of mercy, and that her perfect innocence might avail her; for sorcery was then a new crime, and there were many who totally denied its existence; but the moment she entered the court, and looked on the faces of her judges, and saw that there were eight Hamiltons in the jury-box, she felt that her doom was written, and gave herself up for lost—as the majority of votes form the opinion of a Scottish jury.

The proceedings of the Supreme High Court of Justiciary in 1537, the year of its birth, were, in detail, widely different from what they are to day; and such was its informality, that there was not one witness for the defence, the council for which based his arguments solely on the blameless life, the innocence, and conscious rectitude of the accused.

"I am innocent!" Jane would sometimes repeat to herself; "and they dare not punish me—God will not permit them!"

The clerk of court now stood up to read the indictment, which was written on a strip of parchment:

"Jane Seton, most falsely designated lady and of Ashkirk, thou art delated by the king's advocate for procuring the death of umquhile the queen's grace (whom the blessed Lord assoilzie!) by sorcery and incantations procured from hell; thou art accused of having a familiar spirit; of having renounced thy baptism, and having upon thee the mark by which Satan distinguishes all who have sold themselves unto his service."

"Of these crimes against the laws of God and of man, of nature and our holy Christian church, Jane Seton, art thou guilty, or art thou not guilty?" asked the abbot Mylne, sadly and solemnly.

Thrice the question had to be repeated before she was roused from her apathy to reply.

"Guiltless, father abbot—guiltless of such crimes—even as the blessed Mother of all compassion herself was guiltless," she replied, gently but energetically; "and this day I call upon her to hear the truth of my assertion; and the unhappy never seek her aid in vain."

A murmur floated above the crowd of spectators; and Jane's head again sank on her breast.

Like a sharp poniard, her voice sank into the heart of Redhall. He now arose, and with a paper in his hand—a paper which he nervously folded and unfolded—prepared to speak. He looked like an animated corpse; his long flowing gown of black Parisian cloth, the sable hue of his beard and moustache, contrasted forcibly with

his livid complexion. His eyes were hollow, and a ghastly agony was impressed on every lineament of his face; but attributing these appearances to his long and recent illness, the whole court, from the lord president down to Sanders Screw, the torturer, pitied his sufferings, and admired his worth and unflinching energy as an officer of state.

He dared not turn towards the prisoner, but spoke with averted eyes, which the court attributed to his gallantry and extreme delicacy of feeling. He endeavoured to condense the whole hatred of his heart against her; but love would come again, and they wrestled fiercely for the mastery. His heart swelled within his breast, and his brain became wild. He had two existences, and two hearts—one which loved, and one which hated—one that longed to possess, and another that longed to destroy her.

Then it would seem that he loved her as of old, and was prompted to avow his passion and his guilt, and, asserting her innocence, poniard himself before the court; but again his mad and murderous longing for revenge would come back upon his heart like a devouring fever, and thus he loved and thus abhorred in the same moment. Strange, wild, and inconsistent, his was the love of a devil united to the frenzy of a destroyer; he felt that it was so, and there were times when he doubted his own sanity.

The die was cast now, and a thousand eyes were bent upon him, and a thousand ears were listening. He made a tremendous effort to master his fierce emotions and open the prosecution; and being aware that there were many among the judges who doubted, and even denied the existence of witchcraft, he bent all his dangerous eloquence to prove the first position.

"My lords," said he, with a voice that, from being soft and flute-like, had now become hoarse and hollow—though it sounded like a serpent's hiss to Jane. "My lords, there may be among us those who decline to admit that witchcraft existeth in the world; albeit, divines cannot doubt it, for have not the words of God admitted that such things may be? In the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, we are told that diviners, enchanters, consulters with familiar spirits, witches, and necromancers, 'are an abomination unto the Lord;' and further, the twentieth chapter of Leviticus saith, 'the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, *I will even set my face against that soul*, and will cut him off from among the people;' while the Mosaic law emphatically ordained that no witch shall be suffered to live. We need not, most reverend and learned lords, look so far back for proofs that sorcerers and charmers existed, and do exist; it must be apparent to every reasonable being that what hath once been may be again, for nothing is impossible either to God or the devil; and the ancient chronicles of Scotland, and of every other kingdom, teem with proofs of sorcery. The heathens of the olden time visited witches with the most dreadful punishments; the Persians dashed out their brains with stones; while we know that the Assyrians, Chaldeans, the Indian Gymnosophists, and the Druids of Caledonia, were addicted to the deepest sorcery. By the laws of Charlemagne, a witch who ate human flesh escaped for two hundred sous, which shows (as in the present case) that sorcery was not confined to the lower class of society.

"The emperor Manuel Comnenus punished sorcerers with the utmost rigour; and the blessed St. Patrick

procured fire from heaven to destroy nine of them. St. Colme saw a wizard milk a bull, as we are informed by St. Adamnan, for the saints are constantly watching Satan, the prince of hell and promoter of mischief; and if so, how much more ought we, who are *their* servants, to watch sorcerers and witches, who are the slaves of the devil!

"The witch of Endor feared to practise her sorceries before the king, because he had put to death all who had familiar spirits; and so great was the indignation of God against the sin of sorcery, that he cut off the ten tribes of Israel because they were wedded unto its abominations. John de Fordun records, that in the days of that good knight and gallant king, William the Lion, a wizard who perverted the vision of the people, was defeated by a holy man reading even a passage from the blessed Gospels.

"Among the Romans, Publius Marcius and Pituanus were executed for this crime; as also were Publicia and Lucinia, with threescore and ten other citizens, as Valerius Maximus informs us in the third chapter of his sixth book. Hence, to deny the existence of witches, is to deny the veracity of all history, ecclesiastical as well as secular; and thus sorcery, being the greatest of all human crimes, as it includes heresy, blasphemy, and treason against God, involves the most severe of all human punishments—*death by fire*—for fire is the emblem of purification.

"Picus of Mirandola, who lived in the last century, asserts in his writings, that 'magic is not founded on truth, since it depends upon powers that are enemies to truth;' and further, 'that there is no one power in heaven or earth but may be put in motion by the words

of a magician ;' and he proves that words are effectual in incantations, because God made use of words in arranging the universe."

"My lord advocate, to the point," said the president, drily ; "in many parts of his writings, Francisco Picus was a rank blasphemer."

"The prisoner at the bar is accused of procuring by sorcery, and the aid of magic images, the death of amquhile the queen's lamented grace, whom Heaven assoilzie ! I accuse her of this, and boldly."

"To the proof," said the abbot of Cambuskenneth, as Redhall paused, and faltered.

"No difficult task, my lords," he resumed. "I need not expatiate on the hereditary hatred borne to the king, the queen and court, by the houses of Ashkirk and of Angus. Consanguinity is ever a strong proof of sorcery. The countess dowager of Ashkirk hath long sustained an evil reputation as a dabbler in magic. If the mother be a sorceress, we hold it in law, that the daughter must infallibly be so too. It is the inheritance of hell, and descends, as the children of married saints inherit a share of heaven. Arrian records that prophecy was hereditary, like disease ; and why not sorcery ?"

A murmur of assent replied.

"Hence, reared by her mother, the prisoner brought her damnable and abstruse studies to greater perfection ; the pupil surpassed her teacher ; and it was in *her* boudoir that this image, which is coated over with wax and stuck full of pins, was yesterday discovered by an officer of this high court—an officer whose veracity and worth none will dare to gainsay."

Here Master Birrel smoothed his shock pate ; pulled

up his ruff, which was stiffened with whalebone, and looked complacently around him.

"The good queen's gradual illness and wasting away from the hour of her landing, was the slow but matured work of sorcery ; and such the most learned physicians and apothegars have declared it to be. My lords and gentlemen, here are written copies of the proofs," he added, as his clerks and scribes distributed to the bench and jury a number of written papers ; but the said clerks or scribes might have saved themselves the trouble, as few of the learned lords, and not one of the intelligent jury, could either read or write. Neither had yet become fashionable or necessary accomplishments. "There you will find," continued the lord advocate, "that the queen's grace was first bewitched at the ball in Holyrood, where the Lady Seton induced others to dance a measure diabolique, which is well known to be in use among the witches of France ; and as they danced, so the queen's illness increased with wondrous rapidity. That night her majesty kindly gave the prisoner her hand to kiss ; then lo, again, the power of hell ! the kiss burned into her heart, and she sank into a deadly faint. In both kiss and dance, my lords, we will prove there was sorcery, as the abbot of Kinloss assured me at the time. We all know how much Satan hath achieved by the agency of dancing, on looking back to the fits and visions of the Convulsionists, who in 1373 appeared at Aix-la-Chapelle. There is a certain mountain of the Harz chain in Almainie, where, on the first of May every year, all the witches and wizards of the earth rendezvous to dance on *Valpurgis night*, as they name it. Now *la volta*, the hell-dance, was the ancient measure of the orgia, the feasts of Bacchus,

a god of the pagans—a demon who loved wine. It came from Italy to Spain; from Spain to France; from France to Scotland.

“To the second proof. The prisoner with others visited the booth of Master Mossman, jeweller to the king’s majesty; and there, placing on her head the queen’s new crown (a notable piece of Douglas presumption), said certain words, to the effect that, *she would never live to wear it, for her days were numbered*, and these ominous words, we have here six witnesses to prove. Oh, my lords, did they not clearly and prophetically indicate a foreknowledge of the queen’s death, obtained by the assistance of that familiar spirit who resided with her in the quality of page? Lastly, this image, half roasted and perforated by ninety-nine pins, and marked with a crown and the letters M. B., for Magdalene Bourbon,—my lords and gentlemen, can other proof be wanting?”

Here he held up to view, between a pair of small iron tongs, a little wooden figure, about eight inches long, having on its head a crown.

“Mother of God!” muttered the people, crossing themselves with horror at these accumulated proofs.

“That death may be produced by wasting images, I could adduce a thousand instances; but less will suffice. In the year 980, our own king Duff, who pined under a grievous illness in Murrayshire, was rescued from death when the witch was burned and her images broken. The severe illness of Charles VI. of France was caused by sorcery, and the witch was burnt; so was another, who, in conjunction with the devil, forged a deed in favour of Robert of Artois. The powers of inflicting and of allaying diseases were peculiar to sorcerers; the mother allayed—the daughter inflicted.

Solomon could allay disease by incantations, and Phyrus, king of Epirus, did so by one touch of his great toe. Magic water may have been thrown on the queen's person; for we know that a few drops from Chosopis, the enchanted river of the Persians, brought death to all on whom they fell. As the fire scorched and wasted this image, even so did the poor queen waste and sink. Observe, my lords, it is formed of *pine*."

"The pine was consecrated, by the heathens of old, to Pluto King of Demons," said Lord Auldham.

"And wherever the unhappy queen endured the most severe pains,—in her head, in her heart, or the region of the stomach, *there* we find the greatest number of torturing pins. There seven in each eye, and, like three, *seven* is a mystical number. I have but one remark more, my lords. This image was originally that of one of the three kings of Cologne; it has been abstracted from the rood screen of St. Giles, and made to serve for that of her umquhile majesty queen Magdalene."

"Sacrilege! sacrilege!" cried the crowd of listeners; "blasphemy and heresy!——"

"All of which assuredly require the most severe penalty your lordships can inflict—death at the stake!" and as the lord advocate sat down, pale and exhausted by his long harangue, and by the wild misanthropy of his desperate soul, the horror waxed strong in the hearts of his hearers.

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the lord president, raising his hands and eyes to the oak ceiling, "can this woman, this being abandoned of God and of man, be a daughter of that gallant race, every chief of which has bled for Scotland and its king? Oh, what a wondrous—what a vast amount of sin is here!"

Master Robert Galbraith and Master Henry Spittal,

the most able of the ten advocates, spoke in the defence of the accused, long and ably, but all their arguments were overborne by the sophistry and eloquence of Red-hall, and by the cloud of witnesses for the prosecution, which proceeded with such rapidity, that they were soon silenced, and sat down completely baffled. Then a long and anxious pause succeeded.

Father St. Bernard was in despair.

A senator now spoke; he was the rector of Ash-kirk.

"My lords," said he, "in all that I have this day heard, there is much that perplexes me sorely; for it seemeth that the same faculties which were *miracles* when exercised by the saints, we style *sorceries* when assumed by others. St. Servan of Lochleven converted water into wine, and from the bosom of the arid earth a fountain sprang at the voice of St. Patrick. St. Baldred of the Bass used as a boat that rock which we may still see fixed in the sea near his island; the wooden altar of St. Bryde of Douglas sprouted and put forth leaves at her holy touch; the robe of St. Colme procured rain in Iona; and, in the winter time, St. Blaise could strike fire with his fingers——"

Here a stern glance from the abbot Mylne cut him short, and he paused.

"The blessed saints of whom thou speakest, my lord, wrought those wonders by the aid of Heaven alone, and not by the agency of a black spirit. Of late, the devil hath frequently appeared at the preachings of the reformers as a black cat, and why may he not appear elsewhere as a black boy?" said the president.

"True, most reverend and learned lord," rejoined the meagre little abbot of Kinloss, "need I remind your lordships how my predecessor, abbot Ralph, now

in company of the saints, when holding a chapter of the Cistercians at Kinloss, A.D. 1214, beheld the devil, yea, as surely as my name is Robin Reid, beheld him, in the shape of an Ethiopian, enter by a window ; but, on being exorcised in good Latin, he vanished in smoke.”*

“True, true,” continued Redhall, incoherently ; “and by a devilishly devised compact with this familiar, she assigned her soul to Satan for the powers given——”

“Proof?” said the doubting rector of Ashkirk; “where is this contract?”

“In the archives of hell—therefore, how can we produce it?”

The judge sat down silenced, and a cold smile flitted over the face of Redhall, whose usually impassible front, the Cumæan sybil herself could not have read ; but he looked anxiously at the abbot of Cambuskenneth.

“Would that I knew what is passing in thy bald head, thou shaven dotard !” thought he.

“Familiar spirits are usually black,” said the president ; “the vile impostor, Mahomet, had one in the shape of a black cock, which, when it crew, set all the cocks in the world crowing ; and the Lord Hugh of Zester had a black demon named *Gudeshovel*, who dug for him his goblin hall beneath the surface of the earth. The unhappy prisoner having persisted in denying her guilt, I require a slight application of the torture, and an examination for the devil’s mark, that the ends of justice may be duly satisfied.”

Redhall, who had been but half prepared for this, felt his heart die within him, and he made a convulsive start.

“The torture ! the torture ! Oh, rather let me die !

* See John de Fordun’s “*Scotichronicon*.”

Holy abbot—my lords—I ask you not for pardon, because I am innocent. I think not of vengeance, because I am a woman—and though an earl's daughter and an earl's sister, a poor and helpless one—but I implore death, because ye have dishonoured me by these accusations and by these bonds—cruelly and falsely dishonoured me. Put me to death, but not to the torture ; for oh, I am weak, very weak, and will tell you anything. Let me die ! let me die ! Oh, save me, Sir Adam Otterburn—oh yes, everything—thou who hast done it all, save me from these frightful men !”

As Birrel and Sanders Screw approached the shrinking girl, with their stolid visages and huge hands, though half suffocated by sobs, she gave a low, wild cry of agony and horror, and closing her eyes, became perfectly passive. The judges looked on unmoved ; a thrill pervaded the hearts of the people, and Redhall felt the perspiration trickle over his brow, though his blood ran cold through his veins.

“ Oh, Roland, Roland ! my love ! my love ! I am dying now,” said Jane, in a low voice (that was heard by Redhall alone), as she was lifted from her seat.

Redhall's momentary pity died ; he sat down with one of his freezing smiles—such smiles as can only be given by one who has alike outlived the hopes of his heart and the feelings of humanity.

“ *The torture*,” repeated the lord president.

Redhall dipped his pen mechanically in the ink-stand, and Dobbie uncovered the rack ; then, as every man respired more freely, a low, but unintentional hiss seemed to pervade the hall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RACK—THE DEVIL'S MARK.

"If on the rack you strain our bursting sinews;
If from the bleeding trunk you lop our limbs;
Or with slow fires protract the hours of pain,
We must abide it all."

Boadicea.

As yet neither the boot nor thumb screws had been adopted by the Scottish courts; the ancient rack alone was the instrument of torture, and now it stood before the eyes of the startled people in all its naked and mysterious horror. Though totally repugnant to the fundamental laws of Scotland, which are based on those of Rome, the practice of obtaining confessions by torture in the Privy Council and High Court of Justiciary was not discontinued until a hundred and sixty years after the date of our history, in the reign of William III. who, whatever he was in South Britain, will ever be remembered in the north as one who was merciless as a Mohawk.

The rack, which Dobbie had uncovered, was a large frame of oak, raised three feet from the floor, like a long, narrow bed without spars, but having two rings at the head and two at the foot. The aspect of this engine, with all its accompanying blocks, pullies, chains, and

handspikes in the sockets of the windlass, froze Father St. Bernard with horror. He crossed himself, beat his breast, and closed his eyes.

Old and withered, with a long beard and a hollow-jawed sardonic visage, with leering eyes, a fangless mouth, and bandy legs, Sanders Screw, the torturer and headsmen—the presiding genius over this infernal machine—looked like an overgrown imp, as, with his Concurrents, he hurried agilely from ring to ring, and from rope to rope, putting the whole in working order.

“*Agnus Dei*!” muttered the old priest, who, in a little volume which he wrote, has transmitted an account of these things to us; “all this for one frail body! May Heaven make it without feeling, even as the hearts of those around us.”

Powerless and unresisting, Jane was borne between Sanders Screw and Nichol Birrel towards the rack, and placed within its frame. Birrel remembered Roland Vipont and Douglasdale; and, trembling with joy and revenge, made himself more than usually active. The costume of Screw and his two Concurrents had something strikingly horrible in it; their doublets were scarlet—the judicial colour in Scotland—but their brawny arms were bared to the elbow; and they wore dirty leather aprons, extending from their necks to their knees. Lady Jane’s garments swept the floor, and her long hair, which became unbound as her triangular cap fell off, floated over the shoulder of Screw as he adjusted her in the frame. Then a shudder came over her as the rings and cords were secured to her ankles and wrists, her beautiful arms being extended at full length above her head, revealing the exquisite rounding of her bust and waist. The whole arrangement did not occupy a moment.

While in this frightful and humiliating position, with her head supported in the hands of Screw's apprentice, and her blue silk skirt drooping on the floor, Redhall dared not look towards her, but sat down beside the rack, and bent his bloodshot eyes upon the blank sheet of paper, whereon the coming confession was to be written. He trembled excessively. On the other side was the physician, who attended all such *questioning*—John of the Silvermills—clad in deep mourning, like all the courtiers and dependents of the king, with a white St. Andrew's cross on his black velvet mantle, and having a large pouch at his girdle, wherein were various revivifying drugs and essences.

Gently, but unceremoniously, the greater part of Jane's attire had been loosened by the rapid application of a pair of scissors.

"Now, then, the devil's mark," said the lord president, shading his eyes with his hand, and peering forward over his desk.

Nichol Birrel, sworn pricker of the High Court, now approached with his needle, and ruthlessly uncovered the whole neck, shoulders, and bosom of the unhappy girl. Her skin was dazzlingly white, and shone like polished ivory in the sunlight which streamed through the deep mullions of the windows above her in many hazy flakes.

"Oh!" she murmured, and shuddered, while the hot, bitter tears were seen to ooze from her closed eyelids. An icy sweat burst over Redhall, to behold that beautiful figure extended, almost nude, before so many unpitying and so many voluptuous eyes. His agony was frightful. He could have screamed aloud; and, to prevent himself doing so, buried his fingers in his breast beneath his robe. And there she lay, with a form that

might have passed for Venus—one so delicate by nature and by nurture, with her slender wrists and round white ankles enclosed by strong iron bands, and her uncovered bosom submitted to the eyes of so many men, and the rough paws of the ruffian Birrel.

There were a few generous hearts in the crowd who cried *shame!* and more than one gallant hand sought the hilt of a sword.

A pink spot, like a little rose-leaf, was discovered between her bosom and her waist, and to this the pricker, after making the sign of the cross and other preparations, applied his *brod*, or needle, which was three inches long, and, to the horror and astonishment of all, it sank up to the very handle in the mark, without Lady Seton wincing once, or seeming even aware that she was touched by the instrument.

Again and again the operation was repeated, and the pity of the generous few became blended with the fear and repugnance of the many.

"The mark of hell—the signet of Satan is always thus," said the Lord Kinloss; "for it is lost to all sensation, and deadened to the touch of every instrument—it is bloodless."

The long sharp needle of Birrel was pure and bright, as well it might be; for it was constructed like a theatrical poniard, to *retire* into the handle with the slightest pressure.

Blank dismay was impressed on every face.

Thrice Redhall asked her, in a hoarse and hollow voice, to confess, and thrice she gazed at him wildly, but made no reply; for the powers of life seemed already to have forsaken her. He then made a signal to Sanders Screw, and turned away his head.

Sanders, with his wrinkled and fibrous hands, grasped

the handspikes of the windlass as a seaman would, previous to starting an anchor. Then, with the whole weight and strength of his meagre body, the wretch suddenly depressed them, and every joint of the unhappy being cracked in its socket.

Father St. Bernard muffled his head in his 'cowl, to shut out the fearful sound.

She uttered a cry, the horror of which contrasted strangely with the sweetness and melody of her voice. Redhall felt as if he could have expired; and, in unison with her, he uttered a groan so painful and full of despair, that it must have startled all, had it not been blended with the cry of Jane.

"Mother of God! Mother of God! I will confess—I will confess! Oh, Roland, Roland!"

At these words Redhall bent his head towards the floor, for he felt that he had the face of a Nero, the eyes of a fiend, and he gave another of his horrible smiles. The name of Roland recalled his hatred, and that hatred triumphed over terror and compunction, as ferocity did over feebleness. The bars were a little relaxed, but she was not loosed until the following questions were answered:—

"Jane Seton," said Redhall, in a calm voice, and with an equally calm visage, for, being master of himself, his whole aspect was now as still as if the stormy passions which convulsed his heart were dead; "Jane Seton, dost thou confess to the damnable, the treasonable, and blasphemous sin of compassing and procuring, by sorcery and idols, the death of umquhile the queen's grace, of good memorie?"

"Oh, have mercy upon me!" she murmured.

"Dost thou confess it?"

"Yes."

"Attend, clerks of court. Thou dost confess to having a familiar imp in the shape of a black page, who became the father of thy little devils?"

"Yes."

"Um—um—*coitus cum diabolo*," muttered a clerk of court, writing.

"How many?"

"I know not."

"Another proof of deep sorcery," said the lord president, "for the witches of Germany have been known to have twelve imps at a birth."

"And thou didst suckle these uncounted devils at the mark on thy bosom?"

"Yes, yes; oh, hast thou no pity?"

"Thou false heretic, apostate, liar, and renouncer of thy baptism, thou dost confess to having read English books, containing the dark and damnable heresies of——"

"This belongs to another court," said the abbot Mylne. "My Lord Advocate, we have no jurisdiction here in ecclesiastical matters. Surely, my lords, no further proofs are required?"

The capped or cowled heads of the fourteen lords shook or nodded in assent, and, at a word from Red-hall, Jane was unbound and replaced on her seat; where, with a pale, distorted face, and half insane aspect, she gazed about her, with terrified eyes, between the dishevelled masses of her hair. Her hands, weak, trembling, and almost dislocated, endeavoured to restore the disorder of her dress, but failed in their office.

The physician kindly parted her hair, and drew her disordered dress over her uncovered shoulders.

"Unhappy lady," he whispered, putting something between her lips, "take this comfit—it renders one

almost invulnerable to pain ; though it be not such as those to which the divine Artesius owed his eternal youth and health. But it is the essence of a wondrous herb ; for whatever God planteth, hath its good or bad qualities."

Without hearing him, intent only on retracting her rack-extorted confession, she gathered her hair back from her pallid face with trembling hands, and arose, but only to sink powerlessly on her seat, for her limbs now refused to sustain her, as her tongue refused to speak ; for though her bloodless lips were moving, they uttered no sound. Forced by the torture, a bright streak of pink was oozing from her nostrils.

Again she essayed to speak, but now the jury, without being charged, and without retiring—for such were not then the customs—by the voice of their chancellor unanimously declared her guilty ; and after a brief muttering and bending together of cowed heads, the abbot of Cambuskenneth proceeded at once to pass the sentence.

Taking off his black monastic cap, he raised his eyes, and was heard muttering something "in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, et benedictæ Nostræ Dominæ Sanctissimæ Mariæ . . . thou false sorceress," he said, suddenly resuming his cap and raising his voice,—“thou heretic, blasphemer of thy God and renouncer of thy baptism, for the crimes committed and this day doubly proved against thee by witnesses and from confession—I adjudge thee to be taken to the Castle-hill of Edinburgh at twelve o'clock on the night of the feast of St. Margaret the martyr, five days from hence, and there to be burned at a stake, until thou art consumed to ashes, which shall be scattered to the four winds of heaven, AND THIS I PRONOUNCE FOR DOOM !”

The priestly president ended his sentence by extinguishing the candle which stood at his right hand—an emblem of death, or that hope was gone for ever. Thereupon, Dobbie the doomster, clad in sackcloth braided with white cord, and having a white cross and skull sewn on his back and breast, approached, and laid a hand upon her shoulder, signifying that she was now *his* peculiar charge.

Those lords who were priests waved a benediction to the people, so much did they (by mere force of habit) mingle religious with civil ceremony; then the whole bench arose, and the macer shouldered his mace; but at that moment the clash of swords was heard, and a violent uproar arose at the door of the Exchequer Hall.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GAGE OF BATTLE.

"In an evil hour I left her.
Left her! more I need not say;
Since in my absence came another
Lover, all my peace to slay.
I a captive, he a freeman,
Ah! our fates how different;
Since your arm hath made me captive,
See how justly I lament."

CALDERON'S Constant Prince.

ABOVE the clang of steel and the trampling of feet, a voice was heard that thrilled Jane to the heart; and though feeble, aided by the iron railing of the bar, she suddenly arose, with her hands outstretched and her beautiful eyes bent towards the doorway, where the pike points were glittering above the heads of the crowd. Love and despair gave to her aspect a courage and sublimity which vividly impressed the hearts of all. Between the thick stone mullions and grotesque tracery of a tall gothic window, and through the painted glass, the forenoon sun shone bright and joyously, lighting up her features with a radiance and beauty, the more remarkable by the fantastic prisms of the oriel, and she stood like a beautiful Pythoness.

As she turned away, Redhall ventured to gaze upon her, which he had not yet dared to do; for he felt that he trembled whenever her glance fell on him. She was but the spectre of what she was, and it was he who had made that havoc! A beautiful though hectic colour had momentarily replaced her frightful pallor, but he knew the emotion that caused it. The old whirlwind of passion arose in his heart, and he sank into a chair.

The clank of armour, the noise and swaying to and fro of the crowd continued.

"A rescue!" said the president, and all his brother senators drew towards him, and grew pale.

"Nay, think not of it, my lord," said one, the Knight of Auldham, loosening his sword in its sheath; "for those lances of Sir Andrew Preston are more than guard enough."

At that moment Roland Vipont, master of the king's ordnance, broke through the mass of people, and approached the bench, with his armour rattling and his spurs clanking as he walked. He was cap-à-pie, with his visor up, and his plume was covered by the dust of a long summer march. With his sword drawn in one hand, and his gauntlet in the other, he appeared before the startled tribunal.

Ghastly and pale with fury and fatigue, he looked grimly at the bench beneath the steel bars of his aventayle; and with an air which he alone, above all the Scottish noblesse possessed, confronted them like one valiant Trojan in a Grecian camp.

"Father abbot, my lord president, justice—I sue for justice!" said he.

"And how darest thou come hither in armour to seek it?" demanded the president, with kindling eyes.

"Armour is my garb, because I am a knight and the king's soldier; besides, I dare do whatever becometh a Scottish man," replied Vipont; "and I this day stand before you to demand justice at the sword's point!"

"It has already been given!"

"Priest and judge though thou art, I tell thee thou liest! And here I lay down the gage of battle in accordance with the laws of Scotland, of justice, and of chivalry, binding myself to maintain with the edge of this good sword, and by the aid of the blessed God, on foot or on horseback, in the lists of Edinburgh, or at the Gallowlee of Leith, that Lady Jane Seton is pure and innocent of the crimes alleged against her—pure as when Heaven created her, and that all men who uphold the contrary lie—foully lie! Here lies my glove!" and he hurled the steel gauntlet on the table with a clash which made the clerks of court start from their seats with dismay; for, like all limbs of the law, they had a mortal aversion to cold iron in every shape.

There was a momentary pause; and Redhall, who gazed with gloating eyes upon the lover's agony, felt half inclined to take up the gage, for notwithstanding his unruly passions and studied vengeance, he was both brave and rash; but the stern voice of the president arrested him, saying,—

"Sir Roland Vipont, this claim for the ordeal of battle comes too late, and cannot be admitted. She has fully and amply confessed; besides, this man hath found the mark of hell upon her bosom!"

"Her bosom—this man—John Dargavel!" exclaimed Roland, startled on perceiving the person whom he had compelled to swallow his own poison.

"Nay—no John Dargavel, but a reputable officer

of court," said the president, who felt some compassion for the agony expressed in the young man's face.

"A villain, who excited the lieges to rebellion in Douglasdale, and to a resistance of the royal standard, which occasioned me the killing and wounding of a dozen brave soldiers."

"We have had enough of this," said the president, impatiently; "the poor youth is so blind with passion, that he would not know a hawk from the heronshaw. Break up the court—away, sir! torture hath been applied, and the ends of justice are satisfied."

"Torture—justice!" reiterated Roland, in a voice like a shriek, and looking with terror at Jane, who stretched her feeble arms imploringly towards him. "Lord, Lord, look down upon me, and preserve my senses. Oh, have ye dared, cowards and slaves! is it justice, by rack and torture to wrench confession from the lips of a poor and helpless woman? Smooth fronted villains, is there not one among ye who will dare to take up my gage? Sir William of Balwearie, Sir John of Lundie, Sir Adam Otterburn of Auldhame, do you hear me?"

Not one of the seven lay senators moved.

"Truly, thou art either a madman or a hero!" said the old president, gazing on the armed knight with admiration; "but doom hath been pronounced, and the sorceress must die!"

"Die!" repeated Roland, with a fierce smile. "And coldly thou sayest this? Oh, lord abbot! dastard judge! dost forget that thou growest old, and a day cometh when thou too shalt die, and be called to account for this misused authority. Art thou a god to create, that thou darest thus coolly to destroy; not like a gallant soldier in the heat of battle—but coldly,

calmly, and without anger? But I see it all now ; and though this moment be my last, I will avenge Jane Seton on Redhall—the angel on the demon ! See how pale the coward is before the brave man ! Art thou blanched, Sir Adam, with fear, with fasting, or remorse ? Wretch and villain ! who makest use of the laws to cloke thine own infamous projects of lust, ambition, and revenge ; thus in face of thy deluded compeers, the just God gives thee over to me—at last—at last I have thee !”

And rushing upon the lord advocate with his long sword drawn back for a deadly thrust, he had infallibly run him through the body, had not two of the provost's guard resolutely interposed their halberts, the heads of which he hewed off by one blow.

“ Oh, the fule !” said the host of the *Cross and Gillstoup*, who was among the crowd. “ My thirty crowns ! I may whistle on my thumb for them noo !”

A cry of mingled fear and admiration arose from the people ; it drowned poor Jane's far wilder one of terror, and she made frantic efforts to free herself from the arquebusiers, and to succour or die with her brave lover, who, on being pinned against the wall by more than twenty long pikes, was soon beaten down, pinioned and disarmed.

As he fell, Jane thought they had killed him, and uttered a cry of despair ; all her energies, so briefly recovered, immediately forsook her ; the light left her eyes ; her heart forgot to beat. She became perfectly insensible, and was re-conveyed to the Castle of Edinburgh in a litter, under the care of Father St. Bernard and John the physician.

“ It matters not, this poor victory !” said Roland,

with a bitter smile ; “it matters not, Redhall. I will unmask thee yet, thou subtle villain, and show our too credulous king the true aspect of the viper he has nourished so long.”

“Guards ! away with him—to ward !” cried the advocate, furiously, as he signed a hastily-written warrant : and in one hour from that time Roland found himself committed to the care of Sir James Riddel of Cranstoun-riddel, on a charge of high treason and attempting to murder in open court Sir Adam Otterburn of Redhall.

The excitement in the city was great.

The whole garrison of Sir James stood to their arms, and buckled on their harness ; the brass culverins of the Spur were loaded ; the gates were closed, and bridges drawn up ; while a crowd composed of thousands covered the south and north sides of the Castle-hill up even unto the very ramparts of the hornwork, nor dispersed until long after the lingering sun of July had set behind the hills of Dunblane.

CHAPTER X.

THE EARL'S DARING.

"Dione, then : Thy wrongs with patience bear :
And share those griefs inferior powers must share ;
Unnumbered woes mankind from us sustain,
And men with woes afflict the gods again."

The Iliad, Book V.

A few chapters back, we left the Earl of Ashkirk alone upon the solitary beach near the cavern, on the morning of that day which beheld his unhappy sister for the first time an inmate of the Castle of Edinburgh.

His more bitter feelings of hostility to James had been soothed, for the monarch possessed the charm of the Stuart race—that charm which won the hearts of all whom they addressed ; but being still unforgiven, Lord Ashkirk felt himself an outlaw with the axe of the doomster hanging over his head, while he had to suspect a spy or a foeman in every man he met.

With his eyes fixed on the island castle where his mother and Sybil Douglas of Kilspindie were imprisoned, with all his thoughts centred there, and bent on visiting and freeing them from the thralldom and captivity of a Hamilton, he walked along the sandy shore, revolving a thousand rash, but gallant plans and projects.

He was buried in deep thought, and gradually his head sank upon his breast.

A draught of water from a spring, a bannock and a piece of cheese received at a cottage where he tarried, and, in the hospitable fashion of the olden time, asked for it without shame, and obtained it with welcome, sufficed him for food; and retracing his steps, he wandered westward up the margin of the broad river, until he reached the little kirktown of Wester-Kinghorn (which now bears another name), lying behind the Burnt-island, nestling under the brow of hills that are upheld by basaltic columns, whose summits have been scorched by volcanic fire, and whose rifted sides have repelled the waves of the antediluvian world.

On the high and rocky island, which, though it has now become a promontory, was then completely surrounded by the sea at high water, stood a tower belonging to the Duries of Durie.

Crossing the sandy neck or isthmus while the tide was low, the earl concealed himself among the copse-wood which covered the island on the eastward, from whence he had a view of Inchkeith, distant about three miles, reddened by the setting sun which covered with a golden tint the calm, broad waters of the Firth.*

The wood was in full foliage, and cast a pleasant shade upon the rocks, which were spotted with grey lichens or covered with verdant moss. Here passed the day; and evening came, with silence and darkness, for even the stillness of that lonely isle became more

* Firth, from *Fiord*; not *Frith*, from *Fretum*, as Dr. Johnson erroneously supposed.

still. The wild bees and the buzzing flies forsook the cups of the closing flowers for their homes in the hollows of the old pine-tree; the notes of the mavis and merle died away; the deer came no more to drink of the stream that trickled from the rocks, and the foliage of the isle became moist with the falling dew.

As if in contrast to the storm of the previous evening, the night came on clear, cloudless, starry, and beautiful.

Avoiding that side of the isle which was overlooked by the Duries' castle of Ross-end, the earl sought the beach, where a few fisher boats were moored to rings in the rocks of a lonely creek.

The place was deserted, and not an eye beheld him. His resolutions and execution were brief: selecting the smallest, he sprang on board, cast off the painter, and seizing a pair of oars, each one of which would have required an ordinary man to handle it, he pulled away from the shore with a strength and activity that the sturdiest of our fisher-wights might have viewed with satisfaction and envy. Though as accomplished a knight as ever rode to battle, the earl was somewhat of a seaman, for his father's castle in Forfarshire looked down on Lunan Bay.

He was master of the little bark both by sail and oar; and knowing somewhat of the dangerous navigation of that stately river, avoiding those perilous rocks known as the Gunnel, on gaining the mid-stream, he set the brown lug-sail, which the unsuspecting proprietor had prepared for the little fishing voyage of the morrow, and, favoured by the ebb-tide, the current, and a soft west wind, bore with the speed of a sea-gull straight down towards Inchkeith.

If the wind freshened, he had a thousand chances to one of being swept helplessly out into the German Ocean ; but the bold earl never thought of that.

Alone in the middle of the broad and rapid Firth, its aspect seemed to him magnificent, as the deep red light that lingered behind the western Ochills tinged all its waves with a purple hue ; but their foam became a shower of silver, and white as winter frost, when it broke against the shining cliffs, whereon rose the castle at the west end of the island.

As the earl had resolved on freeing his mother and Sybil from their captivity, his natural boldness prevented him from seeing any difficulty in achieving this project, though he was alone in the enterprise, armed only with his poniard and an old sword which he had picked up in the brawl of the preceding night, and though the castle was commanded by Sir James Hamilton of Barncleugh, with a small but chosen party of soldiers.

"If a Seton could fear, I should certainly be afraid now," said the earl, on seeing how the waves burst in foam on all sides of the Inch—one moment sinking low, to show the reefs, which rose like jagged teeth above them, and the next dashing in torrents against the black volcanic bluffs. "Tut ! by the Pope ! what a mouthful of salt-water !" he added, as the spray was blown in his face, when he dashed his boat through the breakers, and then running along the lee of the shore, struck his sail, and slowly crept near the little creek, which there forms the only landing-place ; for on the east rushes the whole current of the Firth, and on the west breaks the thundering force of the German Sea.

The night had now come on, and solemn stillness reigned upon the isle.

The gates of the square tower which crowned its highest summit were closed ; but here and there a red ray glimmered from the deep windows of its dusky mass.

“ One of these lights,” thought the earl, as he gazed upward, “ may shine on my dear Sybil’s dark glossy hair and snow-white brow.”

The tide was low, and he ran the boat into a little cavern which lay near the creek ; it was, in reality, but the top of a deep chasm in the rocks, having a clear sandy bottom, where he could distinctly perceive the layers of dark pebbles, of bright shells, and waving seaweed, far down below, when the clear moon rose above the Lammermuir, to shed its radiance on the heaving water.

Resolving to wait till midnight, when all the inhabitants of the town most probably would be asleep, and when, with more security, he could make a reconnoissance of the isle and the barbican wall, the earl guided his boat into the narrow little fissure which is one of many that perforate the island. While endeavouring to prevent its jarring on the flinty rocks, he was greatly alarmed by perceiving a human figure spring off a shelf of the volcanic wall, and plunge heavily into the deep dark water of the chasm, which penetrated, he knew not how far, into the heart of the island, but which, as it receded, became more appalling by its utter obscurity and subterranean character.

Incident to the age, rather than the man, the earl’s supernatural fears of kelpies, gnomes, and water-spirits, now became altogether secondary to the dread of having been discovered by some human denizen of the place. He felt for his poniard, and paused. Behind him yawned the pointed arch of the cavern, with the distant

sea-beach shining in the moonlight; before him lay rocks and water buried in darkness. He lingered, oar in hand, scarcely daring to breathe, but heard only the ripple of the rising tide, as it chafed on the walls of the chasm.

Suddenly, another sound smote his ear, that as of a diver rising to the surface; then came a hard breathing on the water, and the regulated plashing as of some one swimming away into that very obscurity which the earl's eyes ached with regarding, but failed to penetrate. His hair bristled, and his heart quailed with momentary terror of a spirit, or evil thing; but from that very terror he gathered a courage, and by his oar and hands, feeling the rocks on each side, shot further in his sharp-prowed boat, intent on overtaking the swimmer, and discovering whether it was a man or devil; but he had not gone twenty yards when the chasm terminated in a sheer wall of rock; and again he paused to listen. The dash of the water had ceased.

He thought he heard other sounds, like those of footsteps clambering up the rock; but feared he was mistaken, for all became immediately still, and he heard only the murmur of the water as it boiled among the reefs without.

"Tush!" thought he, reddening with shame at his own alarm; "it has only been some poor seal or sea-dog basking on the rocks in the summer moonlight. By midnight the moon will be in the west—till then let me sleep, for these last two nights I have never closed an eye;" and looping a rope round a pinnacle of rock, he securely moored the boat, and reclined within it to sleep.

Such was the effect of the weariness oppressing him, that in three minutes he was buried in profound

slumber, rocked by the motion of the boat, which gently rose and fell on the undulations of the water ; for though around the isle the swell was heavy, the waves being broken by the jutting of the rocks at the cavern mouth, they rolled gently and smoothly into its dark recesses.

Now while the earl all unconsciously was sleeping, this little cavern of the sea was filling fast ; for as the rising tide of the German Ocean met the downward current of the Forth, the water rose rapidly against the impending walls.

Ashkirk knew not how long he slept, when he was suddenly awakened by an unusual sound, and, on attempting to rise, struck his head with violence against the stone roof of the cave, close up to which his boat had floated on the rising tide.

His situation was fraught with danger and horror.

Moored fast to a point of rock now far beyond his reach, the boat was wedged between the top of the cavern and the surface of the swollen water, leaving him thus imprisoned, confined, as it were, in utter darkness, and with the deadly fear that the whole of this now submarine grot would be covered by the gurgling tide, in which case he would assuredly be drowned, "and die the death (as he thought) of a rat in a drain."

The partial gleam of moonlight which had illuminated the mouth of this frightful trap had now passed away, and the darkness within and around it seemed palpable and opaque. He could no longer discern where the entrance lay, and his heart sank in the fear that the water had risen over it. He now heard the wavelets rippling, with a thousand hollow echoes, in the fissures and recesses, and gurgling with a sucking sound as they filled each in succession, and rose towards the gunwale of his boat, which had become perfectly immovable.

And the tide was still rising !

He found that he could not survive ten minutes longer. Already the air was stifling, and the necessity of making one desperate struggle for life became immediately apparent. Lying almost on his back, he groped breathlessly around him, and discovered a vacant shelf of rock upon his right. Clambering within it, he found with joy that it led to an inner and upper cavern. He had scarcely left the boat when, with a hoarse gurgle, the tide rushed in and filled it.

As he ascended, a faint red light now flickered on the dark, stony walls of this slimy retreat ; then, indeed, the heart of the gallant earl began to tremble, as his dread of supernatural beings returned. He remembered the strange figure which had disappeared so suddenly into the lower cavern when he first entered it. Again the terror of the water-kelpie came vividly upon him ; for, in that time, all Scotsmen feared that evil denizen of their native seas and lakes.

Though dark, damp, and slimy, it was evident to the earl that the water did not usually rise so far as this upper retreat ; and as the light reddened and increased around him, it revealed the solid masses of whinstone rock which composed the enormous walls of this subterranean vault. Here and there were columns of basalt, or perpendicular lava, with masses of sparkling spar, pitchstone, and porphyry. Still, this strange and crimson light brightened and wavered, dying and growing again, till, overcome by dread of dwarfs and fairies, or spirits still more fell, several seconds elapsed before the earl removed his hand from his eyes, and looked steadily around him.

At the upper end of the grotto, which measured

somewhere about twenty feet square, there burned a fire of wood, green bushes, and crackling sea-grass; and thereat was seated—neither a witch brewing hell-kail, nor a wizard working spells; neither a stunted dwarf forging fairy trinkets, nor some fair water-spirit rising in her naked beauty from a silver shell, but simply a man roasting one of those wild rabbits with which the island has in all ages abounded, and who, with his breath, was blowing aside the smoke, which curled to the upper air through a chasm in the roof.

Lord Ashkirk paused irresolutely; for, in advancing, he might fall upon an enemy, and in retiring, he would inevitably fall into the water, which murmured angrily in the cavern below. The whole aspect of this subterranean cook was wild and strange; and though he stooped immediately over the red embers that gleamed on a shelf of basalt, the intruder failed to discover his features.

Suddenly, something familiar in the attitude flashed upon his memory.

“Sabrino!” he exclaimed, and approached him.

Sabrino—for this mysterious personage was no other—turned round, and bounded backward with a terror which was ludicrously expressed by the blue aspect of his usually sable visage, his dilated yellow eyes and expansive mouth, in the recesses of which he rolled about the voiceless fragment of his mutilated tongue.

“O—ah!” he stuttered, capering with terror, “O—ah—ees a-mee!”

“Now, by St. Mary! I thought thee the devil himself roasting some poor man’s child. Why art thou not attending my mother in that rascally old tower above us? How camest thou to be hiding thus, and in a

condition so dilapidated? But, first of all, how is my Lady Sybil—tush! I waste my time in questioning thee, poor pagan, who art incapable of Christian speech.”

As Sabrino's whole vocabulary consisted of a few guttural sounds, a vast number of contortions of visage and shark-like grins, which were seldom very intelligible to any one save the countess or Lady Jane, who had acquired a knowledge of his meaning by habit, an answer to the earl's three questions was not to be expected. After his first terror, and the extravagance of his after-joy had subsided, his story, if he could have told it, might have been related in a few words.

The blow inflicted by the oar had neither killed nor stunned him; for, luckily, that portion of his frame whereon it fell, namely, his head, was stronger, by nature, than a casque of steel; thus, he merely sank to come up again a few yards distant; but he dared neither to swim after the boat, nor return to the tower where his mistress was imprisoned, and from which he had been so unceremoniously repulsed. Full of hatred and fear of the white men among whom his evil fortune had cast him, the unhappy black page had found this shelter when pursuing a rabbit by moonlight among the rocks. Externally, a thick clump of whin-bushes concealed the fissure that gave admittance to this upper grotto, where, for fourteen days, Sabrino had lurked, coming forth only at night to pick up fuel and shell-fish, crabs, mussels, wilks, and other debris of the ocean on the beach, and to catch the wild rabbits as they slept among the long reedy grass in the moonlight.

During the day he remained close in his retreat; for he knew well that Sir James Hamilton's men in the

tower would have thought as little of shooting him, by bow or arquebuse, as of winging a solan goose.

In these fourteen days, much of the original savagism of the African's aspect and disposition had returned. He looked wild, haggard, and strange, as his glassy eyeballs, and the gold earrings with which the countess had adorned his large ears, glittered in the light of the embers. On his thick woolly head was a cap or crown, which he had woven of seaweed, and ornamented with the crabs' claws and the cockle-shells of his late repasts; his once gay doublet of white satin, slashed with scarlet silk and laced with gold, his tight white hose and trunk breeches, together with the metallic collar of thrall which had the Countess Margaret's arms and cipher engraved thereon, were all woefully changed in aspect, the former being torn to rags, and the latter encrusted with salt by the saline atmosphere of the Firth.

All this and much more the poor mute endeavoured to explain by signs, which were totally unintelligible to the Earl of Ashkirk; who, however, understood one point of the narrative, the necessity of remaining closely concealed.

As Sabrino, to avoid discovery, had to cook all his viands in the night, another rabbit was put to the spit before his fire, on which he threw some of the driftwood and dried seaweed procured from the creek; and there can be little doubt that the glow of this subterranean fire, appearing at times through the fissure in the rocks that bounded the western side of the little valley, formed the gleams of fairy light, which were the source of such alarm to the countess.

Her outlawed son made a hearty meal, which passed for both supper and breakfast; as by the time it was

concluded, Sabrino had carefully extinguished his fire, for morning had dawned, and the beams of the rising sun shone far into the lower cavern, glittering on its wet walls, and casting their reflection on its slimy recesses. The tide, which in full flow completely filled it, had now ebbed; but there were many fathoms of water, dark and deep, in the chasm where the earl's boat lay floating, swamped and brimful to the gunwale; and the task of baling it with his bonnet, for lack of another vessel, was a long and protracted one.

"Now, my friend Sabrino," said he, "dost thou know what has brought me to this rascally island?"

A knowing leer glittered in the shining eyes of Sabrino; and pointing to the tower, he kissed his hand, laid it on his heart, and then pointed to the water.

"Thou art right: to take my black-eyed Sybil from that villanous prison-house. By my faith, thou wouldst make a glorious lover! what a bright leer thou gavest! I would give a hundred gold unicorns to find a sable Venus for thee, my poor Sabrino; and who knoweth, but through the kind offices of the prior of Torphichen and other knights of Rhodez, I may do so. Now, dost thou know in what part of yonder tower Lady Sybil Douglas and the good lady my mother dwell?" asked the earl, pointing to the castle of the Inch, from the whin-bushes which screened the entrance to their hiding-place, and faced the little valley overlooked by the island fortress, and the winding path which ascended to it. "Not those chambers which overhang the ocean, I hope?" he added, anxiously.

Sabrino nodded his head sorrowfully.

"Ah! twenty furies! dost thou say so? How shall I ever reach them, unless I become a hoodie-crow or a solan goose? Do they ever walk in the valley?"

Sabrino nodded again.

"Close to these rocks—eh?"

Sabrino shook his woolly head.

"Are they guarded? The devil! thou noddest thy head again. Indeed, this wary old trooper, Barncleugh, keeps a sure watch over them. By Satan's horns! I may mar his wardship yet. Do he or they know that thou art here?"

Another shake of the head replied in the negative.

"Sabrino, my dark-complexioned friend, listen and look; open thy huge eyes, prick up thy capacious ears, and attend to me. To-night I will scale that castle wall, and thou shalt assist me."

"Ees."

"I have observed that the windows on that side are not barred, because they overlook the water. Thou wilt clamber, and not be afraid?"

"Ees—ees," replied the negro, capering about.

"But we may be shot by the arquebuses of the watchmen."

"O—ah!" howled Sabrino, scratching his woolly head.

"But do not let that affright thee, my Ethiopian; for it hath been the hap of better men before us. An unlucky cannon slew king James II., at Roxburgh, at the very moment he was passing a jest with my gallant grandsire. What matters it whether we are shot now, or die quietly twenty years after this, for in the twenty-first year time would be all the same with us, at least so far as I am concerned personally; but I have it imperatively upon my mind to send certain Hamiltons to the other world before me, ere I can give up the ghost in peace."

The eyes of the negro gleamed, and he laid his hand on his dagger.

"How readily thou snuffest blood, my sable devil. I doubt not thou gottest it with thy mother's milk; for, among the knights of Torphichen, I have heard it said, that in the far away land from whence thou camest, a child receives its first food on a spear, even as our fierce clansmen in the north give the young Celt his first food on the point of his father's claymore. Well, then, listen. Thou seest the wall of yonder barbican, all grey, weatherbeaten, and tufted with grass; well, where that wall joins the tower, I will ascend, and so reach the windows of their apartment. Thou starest. Ah, my my friend, thou knowest not my capabilities in the climbing way. I have done as much before for the mere love of life, and shall I not do thrice as much again for the love of Sybil Douglas, who is dearer to me than a thousand lives?"

The negro clapped his hands, lolled out the fragment of his tongue, and danced about to the jangle of his long earrings, which clanked on his metallic collar.

Being naturally at all times of a sociable and convivial turn, the young earl, to wile away the time, talked constantly to the poor mute, gravely and with drollery by turns, amusing himself with his childish wonder and savage simplicity, for they served to pass the otherwise dreary day; and gladly Ashkirk beheld the sun sink, and the hour for more active employment draw near.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EARL'S SUCCESS.

“ You will quickly find
I'll reach its gates, although, volcano-like,
With thickest clouds it strikes the bright sun blind,
And lightnings flash, and bolts around me strike.”

CALDERON.

DURING the whole of that day, from his secret hiding-place, the earl watched the little green valley that lies in the bosom of the island, and the narrow winding path that ascended from it to the round gateway in the barbican wall of the tower. The latter was an exact square of considerable height, surrounded at the summit by a heavy battlement, having little tourelles at the angles, a row of those brass cannon then known in Scotland as *chalmers*, and a staff, from which was displayed the blue national standard, with the white cross of St. Andrew. But the anxious earl watched fruitlessly; for on this day, neither at the windows, on the ramparts, on the pathway, nor in the valley, did the countess or Sybil appear.

About mid-day, Sir James Hamilton of Barncleugh, the governor of the little stronghold, came forth, and at the gate sat down to his daily employment of playing chess with his seneschal, and drinking Rochelle, while a

few of his soldiers solaced themselves by a game with quoits in the valley below, where, as Sabrino endeavoured to acquaint the earl, the same men had played at the same game, at the same time, every day since he had been on the island; for so passed the time in this little isolated and monotonous place; and nothing ever disturbed the perfect equanimity of its governor (who was content to vegetate like a fungus or a mussel on the rocks), save when the Leith provision boats brought some waggish rumour that his lady, who was a dame of the tabourette at Holyrood, intended to join him—the very idea of which made the bluff old knight tremble in his wide trunk hose.

So close were the quoit players to the place of the earl's concealment, that more than once he shrunk back with alarm, expecting instant discovery, when any of them overshot the mark, and hurled his iron discus to the very verge of the dark whins which shrouded the mouth of the cavern. This group of men continued their play with ardour until sunset; for of this game (which was famous of old among the ancients) the Scots in all ages, as in the present day, have been passionately fond.

While the earl, lover-like, was wasting his time in gazing at the tower which contained Sybil, the black page sat near him, cross-legged, engaged in knotting a ladder from a coil of rope he had found in the boat, and formed it very ingeniously by loops equidistant on each side of the shaft of a stout boat-hook, solacing himself the while by a deep guttural croaking, which he meant for a song, and grinning from ear to ear with delight as his work progressed.

As the sun set behind the Ochils, a culverin was fired from the high carved poop of the Admiral Sir Robert

Barton's ship, and St. Andrew's cross was hauled down from the bartizan; the governor and his little garrison retired to supper, the gates of the tower were closed, and then a perfect stillness reigned throughout the island, which exhibited no sign of life, save when a sea-gull flew screaming round the tower above, or a wild rabbit shot like an evil spirit across the darkening valley below.

The night came on calm, still, and solemn, and the stars were reflected on the broad blue bosom of the Forth. The moon seemed to linger long behind the distant Lammermuirs; but the myriad of stars that dotted the canopy above shed a clear white light on the magnificent river, the bordering hills, and all its rocky isles. Here and there, a red spark, twinkling afar off, marked where a town or hamlet lay, for thickly were they scattered along its fertile shores.

The blue waves were rolling in silver light against the black rocks and volcanic columns of the isle, as the earl guided his boat from its place of concealment, and moored it by the beach; for on this night he had resolved to attempt one of those rash and bold essays of which his life was one continued and exciting succession. With anxious and longing eyes he gazed at the square and lofty tower which stood in dark outline between him and the west, where, above the distant chain of the Ochill mountains, a red light lingered like the last flame of a dying conflagration.

It marked where the sun had set.

"Now," said the earl, as he sprang ashore, "thank heaven, Sabrino, I have bidden adieu to thy dark and dirty fox-hole!"

Armed with his sword and poniard, and carrying with him a stout rope and the boat-hook, which, like the

boat itself (acting under the law of necessity), he had appropriated to himself, the adventurous earl, accompanied by his sable follower, stole up the dark valley, across which fell the sombre shadow of the tower (for though rising, the moon was not yet visible), and crept softly close to the rampart of the barbican.

From thence they piloted their way along the base of the wall, until they reached an angle that overhung the water, which, at the frightful depth of a hundred and sixty feet below, was chafing in foam against the foot of the cliffs, beetling on the very verge of which the tower was founded. According to Sabrino, the windows of the apartments occupied by Sibyl Douglas and the countess, overlooked this comfortable abyss.

To pass the corner of the wall which overhung the precipice was the most dangerous part of the adventure; and, observing that his leader paused with perspiration on his brow and perplexity in his heart, the negro pulled the skirt of his doublet, and made a motion indicative of advancing himself.

"My trusty imp!" said the earl, "where a Seton lingers, it will never do for thee to take the lead; and yet, without the wings of a crow or the claws of a cat, I know not how the devil I shall pass this hairs-breadth precipice!"

While Ashkirk was speaking, Sabrino, who, on many a night before this had scrambled like a squirrel over every part of the island, shot past, and, with his arms embracing the corner of the wall, achieved the feat, and with a guttural laugh held out his hands to assist the earl round.

"Thou art certainly a son of our old friend with the horns; but, by my faith, fall or not, I follow thee!"

and grasping the hand of the agile African, with one stride the earl was beside him.

Then he found himself upon a shelf of rock scarcely eighteen inches broad, with the waves of the Firth hissing in foam far down below—so far, that their angry boom was but faintly heard, while the scared sea-gulls and gigantic solan geese, flapping their wings like thunder, flew out of their eyries, plunging and screaming in the abyss beneath.

About three miles off, the lights of Leith were faintly glimmering through that haze which often shrouds its shore.

Though eminent for courage in a gallant age, the earl felt his heart grow sick for a moment at his perilous position. At his back was the wall of the keep, some seventy feet in height; and twenty feet from where he stood was a large window secured by two bars of iron in the shape of a cross; and there Sabrino indicated, by a multitude of signs, contortions, and guttural sounds, the countess resided.

"I have thrown a lance six ells long, at a smaller mark than that window," said the earl; "and I must be blinder than a bat to miss it; but as thou knowest, Sabrino, the business just now is not to hit the window, but to click the boat-hook to the bars. Ah, plague! if we should only break the glass, and the window be, after all, that of Sir James Hamilton, or some of his fellows! my blood runs cold at the thought; they could pop at us so leisurely with their hand-culverins; and I assure thee, I have no wish to be shot like a poor pigeon here."

As the earl spoke, he secured one end of the rope to the ladder which had been formed of loops on the shaft of the boat-hook, and tied the other round his

waist; he then, with all the force that his dangerous footing permitted him to exert, shot up the hook towards the window; but missing it, was nearly thrown over the cliff by the jerk of its descent.

"Courage!" said he, grasping it again; "I am only twenty feet from thee, my dear Sybil."

Again he threw, and with joy beheld the steel hook attach itself to the iron cross bar of the window. Then he waited breathlessly to hear if the noise caused any alarm; for there was as much chance of a mustachioed soldier appearing at the window as of Sybil Douglas presenting her fair face and startled eyes. All remained still but the screaming of the sea birds around them, the dash of the breakers below, and the dull hum of the rising wind as it swept along the Firth. Then fearlessly the brave earl began his ascent. On the strength of the rope, the hook, or the shaft, he never bestowed a thought; but solely intent on seeing his mother and Sybil, clambered eagerly but carefully up the rough wall, which was grey and weatherbeaten by the saline atmosphere and ocean storms of many a century, and against which the ladder swung frightfully to and fro, until he reached the window, grasped its massive cross bar, and gained a comparatively secure seat upon its deep broad sill.

He peered in, and listened, as well as the thick panes of coarse and encrusted glass, which filled the window, would permit, and between the yellow damask curtains saw a plainly furnished sleeping apartment, in which Sybil and his mother were kneeling at prayer, before retiring. Their rosaries were at their wrists, and they knelt before one of those little altars which then formed a part of every Scottish household; as they do in Catholic countries still. It was somewhat like a cabinet,

and had a figure of the Madonna, bearing in her arms the little infant Jesus. Upon her head was a wreath of freshly gathered flowers, and before her burned two little wax-tapers, which had been consecrated at the last candle-mass by the abbot of Inchcolm.

The earl waited until their orisons were over ; and while they prayed his heart swelled within him at their unaffected piety ; for his memory went back to other days, when, in their secluded home at Ashkirk, in Angus, he had knelt by his mother's side, and first learned to lisp the very prayers she was now repeating. An emotion of shame came over him, on reflecting that in the wandering life he had led, and especially during his exile at the court of the libertine Henry VIII. of England, he had neglected every office of religion. He observed that his mother had become paler and thinner, and that her hair seemed to be silvered with white ; but that might have been the effect of fancy, or of the dim light of the apartment.

Sybil had lost somewhat of her rich bloom ; but her dark eyes were bright as ever. Her black hair flowed from under her triangular cap, and hung like a silky veil over her shoulders, the curve of which, as she knelt with her head bent forward, was eminently beautiful. The edge of each large ringlet, the pearls of her cap, and the top of her smooth forehead, were all tipped with pale light by the tapers. She wore a long dress of purple satin, with an open neck ; and in the light and shadow its folds seemed to glitter with many prismatic hues. It is impossible to say whether it was the brilliant and piquant expression, the noble features, and pure complexion of Sybil's face, that made her adorable, but, taken together, these attributes of the old Douglas race made her singularly so.

The moment their orisons were over, the old countess arose to the full extent of her great stature ; and though aged, being unbent, her figure was remarkably elegant, its height being increased by her shoes—the “cork-heeled shoon” of our old national ballad—and after solemnly crossing herself three several times, she extinguished the tapers on the altar, and kissed Sybil with all the affection of a mother.

The sole light in the chamber now came from two wax-candles, which were held in the outstretched arms of a grotesque figure of Florentine workmanship, placed on the dressing-table at the farther end, and immediately opposite the window where the earl had perched himself.

CHAPTER XII.

SYBIL.

"Come, my Antonia, come,
I'll lead thee to the blissful land of love,—
I'll lead thee to the pinnacle of joys,
Where round thy path the fairest flowers of earth
Shall bloom in radiant beauty to reward
Thy noble deed—come, dearest."

THEODORE KÖRNER.

A GUTTURAL laugh announced to the earl that Sabrino had also ascended the ladder, and was rejoicing at the sight of his mistress.

"Hold fast! by my faith, thou hast the hands and feet of a marmoset. Hush! I would hear them talk a little," said the noble, adjusting himself upon his giddy perch. "By Jove! we are like a couple of crows up here—thou like the black, and I like a white one."

"Ees," grinned Sabrino, whose whole vocabulary was nearly comprised in that sound.

The moment their orisons were over, Sybil went to the opposite window, and withdrawing the curtains, gazed stedfastly towards the eastern end of the little valley.

"Dost thou see it again, bairn—that ill-omened light?" asked the countess, approaching.

"Yes; oh, yes!" replied Sybil, with a voice of surprise and fear; "brighter to-night than ever before."

"Then it must be either a corpselicht, that burneth on the grass, to mark where a slain man sleeps, or a fairy candle, at the rock where the whinbushes grow. Corpselichts burn blue, and fairy-candles are siller white."

"But this burns redly, and it brightens fast!"

"By the Lord!" said the earl, with alarm, "in our hurry to-night thou hast forgotten to extinguish our fire, master Sabrino; and we have widened the aperture at the chasm. Mass! if the knaves of watchmen see it, we shall be discovered, and taken!"

Sabrino turned skyblue in the dark at this terrible suggestion.

"There is a knowe among the hazlewoods near our castle of Ashkirk, where the gude neibours dwell; and ever and aye on St. John's night, a light of siller white shines among the grass that grows beneath the thick dark trees. Now it chanced that, on the eve of that blessed festival, in 1510 (oh, waly! only three years before dreich Flodden-field, and good king James's death), Hughie o' the Haugh, a poor cottar-body, who dwelt at the glenfoot, was coming home from the next burrow toun with a bag of barley on his horse's back, and trudging, staff in hand, behind, lamenting sorely at the tidings he had that day heard at the market cross; for brother Macgridius, of the blessed order of Redemption, had seen his son, a puir sailor lad, taken prisoner by the cruel pagans at Barbary, who demanded a hundred pieces of gold for his ransom. Hughie could as easily have raised the Bass Rock as a hundred pieces of gold; and he went homewards, with his bonnet owre his eyen, groaning in great anguish of mind. Oblivious of all but the loss of his only son, poor old Hughie followed his horse, which knew right well the drove road that

led to his thatched stable, at the back of the auld farm toun; when suddenly, at the fairy knowe, the animal pricked up its ears, trembled, and stopped, as a wee diminutive mannie, not two feet high, and wearing an enormous broad blue bonnet, and a long beard, that reached to his middle, rose off the stone dyke, and bade Hughie hail.

“‘Gude e’en, Carle Hughie,’ said he; ‘how went the markets?’ he added, with an eldritch laugh.

“‘Sorrowfully for me,’ replied the other, wiping his eyes with the neuk of his plaid.

“‘Wherefore, Hughie, wherefore, ye silly auld carle?’ quoth the little man.

“‘Because I come back with a light purse and a sorrowfu’ and heavy heart,’ replied the poor cottar, peering under his bonnet, and terrified at the wee figure; for he knew it was one of those unco creatures whom it was dangerous to seek, and still more dangerous to avoid or to offend.

“‘I am sorely in want of barley, carle,’ said the mannikin, stroking his long white beard; ‘ye must sell me that load, and at mine ain price, too.’

“‘I lack siller, gude sir, as sorely as ye can lack the barley,’ urged the poor crofter, who feared that the payment might be fairy-pennies or pebble-stones.

“‘I never was hard on a puir man yet,’ replied the little mannie, testily; ‘and I have dealt wi’ your race, Hughie, for many a generation. When grain is plenty I buy it; for I tell ye, carle, that a time of sad and sair scarcity for puir Scotland is fast coming. So, here! I ken what ye are graning for, ye greedy body,’ quoth the creature, plunging each of his hands into the enormous pockets of his doublet, ‘here are a hundred pieces of good red gold; ransom your son, and give me a help

wi' the barley pock; my back hath borne a load like that, and mair.'

"With fear and joy mingled, Hughie received the gold, and transferred the bag of barley from the back of his horse to that of the little man, of whom it left no part visible, save his bandy legs, his walking staff, and the end of his long white beard.

"'Gude e'en to you, Carle Hughie; a safe voyage hame to your son,' said the awesome buyer, and manfully striking his staff into the ground, he trudged up the steep knowe, and disappeared below the dark trees.

"Hughie hastened back to brother Macgridius, and, with joy, paid him the hundred pieces of gold for his son's redemption from slavery; and not without many a fear that before his eyes the coins would turn into birch leaves or cockleshells; but that was impossible, for they were ilka ane our gude Scottish gold, but six hundred years old, for they bore the name of king Constantine IV., who was slain at the battle of Cramond."

"And Hughie's son was released?" said Sybil.

"Yea, child, and is now master gunner of Sir Robert Barton's ship at Leith."

With his legs dangling over the surf, and being in imminent danger of drowning, it may easily be supposed that the earl listened to this fairy legend with the utmost impatience; but while his mother spoke, and Sybil listened with the utmost good faith and reliance (for in those days, as at this hour, in some parts of Scotland, one might as well have doubted their own existence as that of fairies and other spirits of good or evil), the earl had gently raised the heavy and massive sash of the window, slid into the room, and concealed himself behind the thick damask curtains, his heart beating the while with the mingled desire of rushing forward to embrace

his mother and Sybil, and a fear that their alarm might be communicated to the inhabitants of the tower, many of whom had not yet retired to rest.

"Look, look, Sybil!" exclaimed the countess, "the whins are on fire. Surely that is no fairy light!"

As she spoke, a watchman on the tower head sounded his horn.

"Hark! the castle is alarmed!" said Sybil.

The earl saw that not a moment was to be lost now. Their fire in the cavern had by some means communicated itself to the whin-bushes at the entrance; an alarm had thus been given, and immediate action became necessary.

"Sybil," said he, "Sybil——"

"Just Heaven! my son's voice!" exclaimed the countess, becoming deadly pale, and feeling in her bosom for her case of reliques. "It is a spirit—a warning! It is a spirit!"

"Ten devils, lady mother! do not cry out!" implored the earl, gradually emerging from his hiding-place; "I am not yet a spirit, thank Heaven, and have no wish to be one."

"Then, oh, Archibald, how came you here?" she exclaimed, throwing her arms around him.

"By the window," he replied, embracing Sybil in turn; "by the window, as you may see."

"And Sabrina, my poor Sabrina!"

The black sank upon his knees to kiss her hands, and then danced about the room, performing the most extravagant capers to the sound of his long clanking ear-rings.

"By my soul, mother, the times are sorely changed with the Setons, when my father's son comes to visit thee and his betrothed wife like a rascally stoutriever,

by the window instead of the door—in the night instead of the day.”

“The window!” they repeated, and became speechless for a moment, as they thought of the precipice, and the water at its foot.

“Faith, very few, I believe, would have dared what Sabrino and I have dared and done—but it was for thee, mother, and thee, my life, my love, my dear Sybil!” said Ashkirk, kissing her olive cheek.

“My brave Archibald, did the power of sorcery or of providence bring thee to this prison island?”

“Neither, lady mother, but a smart boat, which, in another hour, shall convey you hence, with a fair breeze and a flowing sail.”

“But how?”

“I know not yet, for we have to leave this tower, and baffle the old bear, its governor, the laird of Barncleugh.”

“My son, here have we dwelt for more than two weary weeks, and never a letter nor message hath come from thee or Roland Vipont.”

“Vipont is on the king’s service in Douglasdale, and for fourteen days I have been a prisoner in the house of Redhall; for the other two I have been vagabondizing.”

“And Jane,” said Sybil, “your sister Jane?”

“Is safe, I trust; but whether with Marion Logan, at Restalrig, or with my old friend Josina, the fair Prioress of St. Catherine, I cannot for the life of me say. Now, pretty rogue, at what art thou laughing?”

“At thy figure, lord earl; ’tis like the satyrs on some old tapestry; thou art quite a wild man.”

“True, cousin; I am scarcely fitted for appearance at Falkland or Holyrood, or in the Hall of the Three Estates, unless it were, as it may too soon be, at the

oar. But ah, Sybil, my dear little Sybil, what pleasure the sound of your voice gives me! 'tis like the dream of—Hark! what an uproar! the burning whins have alarmed old Barncleugh and all his fellows. Come now, Sabrino, my man of the earrings, a truce to these mad capers—dost thou hear me?”

Sabrino stopped a fandango which he was performing on his head and hands, and pricked up his enormous ears.

“Quick with our rope ladder, for thou, my mother, and Sybil too, must descend from this window on the dark side of the tower; it is not more than fifteen feet from the ground, I think.”

“But the barbican gate?” said Sybil.

“I will unlock it with the point of my sword,” replied the fiery earl, as a savage gleam shot from his eyes.

“Nay, nay,” said the countess, crossing her hands, and standing very erect, “I cannot think of flying thus; the king has placed me here, and the king must release me.”

“What frenzy is this? Besotted by his French marriage, the king hath become a fool. Quick, Lady Ashkirk! we have not a moment to lose. Hark! the whole tower is silent now, for its inmates are away down in the valley, seeking the source of that sudden fire. Oh, if the knaves should discover my boat! Quick!—are you a coward, my mother—the widow of my father?”

“A coward never came of the line of Kilspindie, and a coward had never slept in your father’s bosom, Lord Archibald,” replied the tall matron, proudly, and with asperity, as her eyes filled with tears. “Thou knowest not, my son, how life sometimes rises in value with the

unfortunate; but it is neither the love of life nor the fear of death that restrain me now, but a shame to fly, like a thief in the night, from the wardship of either king or clown."

"Now, by the faith of Seton! these are pleasant remarks to me, who have been skulking like a thief and a vagabond too, for the last few years—a creditable occupation for an earl! If thou stayest, here will I stay too," said Ashkirk, and seating himself, he folded his arms; "if Barncleugh finds me, thou knowest my doom, for I shall die the death of an outlaw and traitor. By my soul! 'tis outrageous, this!"

"Thou art right," replied the old lady, trembling with sudden alarm; "I thought not of that. Quick, then! Old as I am, thou shalt see that now, as in the days of James IV., of gude memorie, I am a true daughter of old Archibald Greysteel."

"We have lost ten good minutes already," replied the earl, lowering his rope ladder from the small window, which, luckily, was ungrated, being within the barbican. Fortunately a gusty wind had risen, and the moon, which was partially obscured by passing clouds, having verged far to the south-east, threw the sombre shadow of the tower over that part of the court into which the fugitives were about to descend. The little castle was almost deserted, the iron gate of the barbican stood wide open, and the barking of dogs and hallooing of men ascended from below, where Barncleugh, with ten or fifteen of his followers, searched the valley for the source of that nocturnal fire which, on this occasion, had become so palpable, and caused such alarm.

"I will descend first, and hold steady the foot of the ladder; and do thou, Sabrino, my gallant imp, hold fast its top," said the earl, as, with his drawn sword in his

teeth, he slid in a moment to the ground; "come, dearest Sybil, do thou set my mother an example."

With Sabrino's assistance, the young lady got out upon the ladder, which she clutched with a death-grasp, while the wind expanded her dress, and blew all her long black hair about her face.

"Oh, cousin Ashkirk!" she exclaimed, in great terror.

"Oh, cousin Sybil!" replied the earl, jestingly, in the same tone, to reassure her; "I will swear thou hast the handsomest ankles and the handsomest leg in all the Lothians."

This intimation made her come down very quickly, and the earl received her in his arms with joy.

"Now, my lady mother, quick, bestir thee," said he, in a low voice. But terror seized him when a cry from his mother replied, and the explosion of a petronel followed; then Sabrino sprang from the chamber, and descended the ladder with the rapidity of light, and with his poniard in his hand.

There was blood on its blade!

A servant of Barncleugh had rushed in, and, surprising them, had fired his petronel at the negro, who, springing at him like a tiger cat, inflicted a deadly wound with his poniard.

"Away, Sybil! come away! We have not a moment now to lose!" said the earl.

"But your mother, your poor mother!" she urged.

"Her own folly has done it all; those ten minutes had freed her; but she must be left for the present;" and, almost dragging Sybil, he led her out of the bar-bican and down the valley, keeping carefully on its shadowy side, which, fortunately, lay towards the beach.

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAMILTON ! A HAMILTON !

“ Oh, stay at home, my only son,
Oh, stay at home with me !
For secretly I am forewarned,
Of ills awaiting thee !
Last night I heard the deid bell sound,
When all were fast asleep ;
And aye it rung, and aye it sung,
Till all my flesh did creep.”

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD.

UNOBSERVED, they reached the verge of the beach, and were about to descend, when Sabrino suddenly grasped the arm of the earl.

He turned.

The negro had his poniard in his right hand, and placed a finger of his left on his lips, in token of silence ; there was a savage gleam in his shining eyes.

“ Well, Sabrino, what dost thou see now ? ”

Sabrino pointed, and, a few yards below, the earl saw a man, having in his hand a drawn sword, which glittered in the moonlight. That he was a gentleman was evident by his dress—a plum-coloured doublet, orange hose, a blue velvet mantle, and waving feather. He was ascending straight from the little creek, where

the boat was moored to a fragment of rock, and had, beyond a doubt, discovered it.

"My lord!" said Sybil, breathlessly; "'tis Sir James of Barncleugh himself."

"Oho! I have not met this worthy laird since we broke the pikemen of Arran at Linlithgowbrig. He owes me more than one sword cut; and I do not like debtors of that kind."

"Oh, if possible avoid him!"

"My dear Sybil!——"

"Death will come of it!"

"A little prick with a poniard will do him no harm."

"But while you fight, his people will come upon us. Now, dear Archibald, pray——"

"I am not in the sweetest of tempers just now; and—soho! thou Hamilton! clear the pathway, or I will trounce thee soundly."

"Who are *you*?" asked Sir James, standing on his guard, right in the centre of the path that led to the boat; "and what seek you here, sirrah?—stand and answer."

"I sought Sybil Douglas, Sir James."

"What do I hear—the Earl of Ashkirk! Now, by the soul of Arran! thou leavest not this island but in a coffin. Pardon me, my young lady of Kilspindie," said the old governor, courteously raising his blue velvet bonnet to Sybil; "pardon me, but this rash gallant must pay the penalty of coming uninvited here. Hollo! *a Hamilton! a Hamilton!*"

"Dishonour dog your heels, base Barncleugh! and may that accursed slogan never be heard but in shame and defeat!" exclaimed the earl, infuriated to find him thus crying aloud to summon his men, who were scattered over the island, and many of whom were

visible in the moonlight, and not far off. "To the boat, Sybil, and leave me to deal with this rough tilter ! To the boat ; see to it, Sabrino. Sir James Hamilton, I have fought fifteen times, and three of my adversaries are dead ; thou shalt make the sixteenth combatant I have encountered, and the fourth I shall have slain ; and, as God be my judge, unwillingly. Come on !"

Both drew their daggers, and stood with their swords on guard.

In the sixteenth century, fencing in Scotland was very different from what it is to-day—a pastime for boys. It was then the indispensable accomplishment of the soldier and gentleman, for every gentleman was then a soldier. Long, straight, and heavy, the swords were double-edged ; consequently, there were as many cuts as thrusts ; and being furnished with long arm-pit daggers, the left hands of the duellists alternately acted offensively and defensively, and very often gave the finishing blow, when the sword of one adversary had beaten down the other's guard, and the combatants came to closer quarters.

Alarmed lest the voice of Barncleugh should have reached his people, excited by the imminent danger of his position, and by the instinctive feudal hatred of Sir James Hamilton, the earl attacked him with the utmost fury, assailing him with point and edge ; and warily the older swordsman received him, warding the cuts with his rapier, and parrying the thrusts with his poniard. The steel rang and flashed like blue fire in the bright moonlight ; and a shower of red sparks flew from either weapon as their keen edges met, and made the arm of each combatant tingle up to the shoulder blade.

Somewhat older fashioned, and more stiff than the earl, the knight of Barncleugh was unable, like the former, to lengthen and shorten himself—one moment to spring agilely to the right, and the next to make a furious assault on the left; or, in avoiding a breast-high thrust, to lie so far back that his dagger-hand rested on the turf. Firm and erect, the old laird stood like a tower; and the whole of his skill (which was not little) lay in his sharp and unerring eye, his strong but pliant wrist.

Meanwhile, Sabrino had placed Sybil in the boat, and standing in the water, which came up to his arm-pits, held the bow to the edge of the rock, that the earl might readily leap on board.

The result of a combat between two such well-matched swordsmen was a number of mutually inflicted cuts and scratches, which exasperated them both. But their animosity had different incentives—Barncleugh fought for honour alone; but the earl fought for his honour, life, liberty, and possession of Sibyl Douglas; a cry from whom, together with a distant hallo, informed him that the conflict was observed by several of Barncleugh's soldiers, who were hurrying down the steep pathway which led to the creek. This made the earl fall on with such fury, that the calmer Barncleugh ran his sword through his doublet (and grazed his ribs) up to the very hilt.

Imagining that he was run through the body, and slain, the earl seized the guard of Barncleugh's sword, to retain it in his body, and closing up with his own sword shortened in his hand, buried the point in the breast of Barncleugh, whose plum-coloured doublet was covered with blood in a moment. Then hurling him to

the earth, he sprang wildly on board the boat, with one sword in his hand, and another, to all appearance, in his body.

At the same moment, a loud hallo rang again in his ears—a rapid explosion followed, and the balls of three arquebuses whistled past his head. Thinking only of Sybil, he pushed off the boat, forgetting altogether the poor black page, whose tongue was unable to cry either for pity or succour; and thus Sabrino was left behind again.

Raising himself on his left hand, while with his right he endeavoured to staunch the blood that flowed from his wound, Sir James Hamilton cried hoarsely and feebly—

“To your arquebuses again, ye knaves—again! Shoot, and shoot surely! See, ’tis the black devil again!—there—there—in the water! To your arquebuses—shoot, shoot, with a wannion upon you!”

The three arquebusiers stuck their forks in the sand, and levelled their heavy fire-arms over them. Again, two large bullets whistled after the earl, and one dashed the spray about the black woolly head of Sabrino, which was visible on the moonlighted water; but he dived like a duck, and disappeared. The reports of these large fire-arms rang with a hundred reverberations among the cliffs and caverns of the isle, and in the fissured rocks of the Longcraig (a reef which guards it on the east), until they died away on the wind that blew freshly down the river from the west.

“To the boat! to the boat! follow, and shoot! *A Hamilton! a Hamilton!*” cried Barncleugh, as he sank back choked in blood.

“Seton, and *Set on!*” replied the earl, with the punning slogan of his house; “for, by St. Andrew,

there is one Hamilton less in the world!" and with savage glee he plucked from his doublet, and flung back to the shore, Sir James's sword.

Then snatching his oars, he placed his feet firmly against the stretchers in the bottom of the boat, and intent only on leaving the island as far behind as possible, pulled with all his strength away from its rocky shores.

After some delay, Barncleugh's followers unmoored their boat, which, by a chain and padlock, was secured to an iron ring; and then pushed off, two plying their arquebuses, while four plied their oars. Away they came, with a shout that floated far over the still water; but by this time the earl was nearly half a mile from the island, and, acting under a natural reaction of feelings, Sybil waved her handkerchief, in token of the triumph and defiance which had replaced her previous terror.

Lustily pulled the brave earl, and even Sybil would have put her dimpled hands to the oars to assist him, had she not soon required them both to grasp the seat beside him, as their little boat rose like a cork on the heavy ground-swell that rolls between the island and the shores of Lothian.

The wind was rising.

It blew freshly down the Firth, and as the tide was ebbing now, a strong current ran seaward—a current against which the solitary rower struggled in vain; for in fifteen minutes he found they were swept far below the island.

He saw the four oars of his pursuers flashing in the moonlight, and the glitter of steel announced that they were well armed; while every successive gust of wind that swept over the curling water brought nearer and

nearer their triumphant shout; and he could see how, at times, they paused, and complacently looked over their shoulders to contemplate the distance as it lessened by their efforts.

And it was lessening fast !

The earl thought of Sybil, and of what her feelings would be if he was taken, and of what she and his mother would experience if he was brought back to the island a breathless corpse. These anxieties received an additional impulse by the flash of an arquebus from the pursuing boat; and the earl saw that the bullet skipped over the waves far ahead of him.

There was now but one alternative, and he did not hesitate to adopt it.

Stepping the little mast, he hoisted the lug-sail, squared it to the western breeze, grasped the tiller, while Sybil threw her arms around him; and now their boat, sharp-prowed and clinker-built, like all the Scottish fisher craft, favoured by the wind, by the ebbing tide, and the fast flowing river, flew like a gull down the widening Firth; and then a shout of anger announced that the followers of Barncleugh were left far behind.

* * * * *

Grasped by a watchman of the tower, when in the very act of attempting to descend, the Countess of Ashkirk, as we have related, had been left behind; but she saw from her window the flash of steel on the beach; she heard the shouts and outcries of the Hamiltons, and prayed and trembled for her son. She saw the two boats which shot off from the island, on the bright surface of the glittering river, which was all shining like a mirror, save where a flitting cloud obscured it. She had seen these boats lessening in the

distance; and again on her knees she implored St. Bryde of Douglas to watch over the safety and escape of her son, vowing to endow in her name a yearly mass and an altar in the great church of St. Giles.

The countess knew not that her "brave rash bairn," as she called him, had achieved both his safety and escape, until Sir James Hamilton was carried into the tower bleeding profusely, and almost dying. Now it was that the fierce feudal hatred in which she had been nurtured, and in which she had reared her own son, jarred with her natural kindliness and pity; and it was with a strange, and, as she often thought, unchristian sentiment of joy and triumph, mingling with her tenderness and compassion, she prepared lint and bandages, with some of her favourite salves and recipes, for the wounded castellan, whose sword thrust she proceeded to probe and dress.

The moment Sir James's wound (which was a deep, but not dangerous stab in the breast) was dressed, she hurried to the tower head, and looked towards the east, but neither of the boats were visible. The moon had become obscured, the rising wind howled drearily through the embrasures of the battlement, and the dusky shadow of a dark cloud rested upon that part of the Firth where the boat of the earl had last been visible.

The heart of Lady Ashkirk became oppressed by vague terrors; and after praying as only the people of the olden time could pray, when faith was strong in the land, and superstition stronger, she returned to the bedside of her patient; and such was her care and skill, that in three days the hardy old knight was again seated at his little tripod table by the tower gate, with the

ocean below, and the gulls around him, drinking his peg tankard of spiced Rochelle, and playing chess with the seneschal of the establishment, who knew his duty too well ever to attempt to win a game; thus that easy-tempered personage allowed himself to be defeated ten times a day, if nine victories did not satisfy the old knight his master and antagonist.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAVID'S TOWER—THE PHYSICIAN.

"Ah, no more can gladden me,
Sunny shores or dark projections,
Where in emulous reflections,
Blend the rival land and sea ;
Where alike in charms and powers,
Where the woods and waves are meeting—
Flowers with foam are seen competing—
Sparkling with the snow-white showers."

CALDERON'S *Constant Prince*.

IN the reign of James V. the Castle of Edinburgh was composed of numerous round and square bastel-houses, which, connected by curtain walls, surrounded the summit of the rock, and were built in various ages by successive princes, and presented the various cadences of architecture, from the strong grim peels of Malcolm Ceanmhor to the florid Scoto-French towers of the fourth and fifth Jameses.

The principal of these bastel-houses was named king David's Tower.

It was erected by David II. in 1357, and therein he died on the 7th May, thirteen years after, when planning a new crusade. This keep was of great height and strength, and overhung the cliff, which now looks down

on the gardens of Princes-street, two hundred feet below. One of its lofty turrets was struck by lightning during a terrific storm, on All Saints' Day, 1524, the shattered fragments fell into the loch, and the electric fluid set the apartments of the queen-dowager Margaret on fire. On its summit, James V. placed thirty pieces of cannon. The larger chamber within it was named the Lords Hall; another was styled the New Court Kitchen; but its first apartments were a range of dreary vaults; for the whole edifice was a veritable castle, with its dungeons below and battlements above. On the latter were a flag-staff, and an iron baile to herald foreign invasion to the shores of Fife and Stirling; just similar to one which still remains on Mylnes-mount below the Argyle battery.

In the same vaulted apartment wherein James V. had, six years before, confined John Scott, a miracle-monger, who pretended that the Virgin Mary could maintain him for any length of time without food, Lady Jane Seton had been detained since her condemnation. Though the strength of the tower was great, its walls of stone being ten feet thick, its doors of iron deep and narrow, and having other securities in the shape of high curtain walls, higher rocks, cannon, towers, and port-cullisses, the Master Porter of the castle (that supernatural guards might not be wanting) had painted on the chamber door a flaming red cross; and thereafter nailed on a horse-shoe, a fox's face with a bunch of rosemary and rowan-tree, all of which, he had no doubt, would do more than stone redoubts and iron-doors to keep the witch in and the devil out.

Let us take a view of her as she appeared on the second day after her trial, for it was now the second, and she had but three days to live.

It was evening now, and the kirk and convent bells of the city below were floating upward to her grated window, which was open, for the season was the sultry month of July. The whole apartment was as bare and stony in its aspect as the arch of a bridge, or any of those caverns in which we have seen Lord Ashkirk hiding; for the groined arch, the low massive walls, and the floor were all composed of squared blocks of freestone, quarried from the rocks in the neighbourhood. Its whole furniture consisted of a chair and table, the latter being composed of mere fir planks; a leather jar of water, and a bed situated within an arched recess, like a pedestalled tomb in some old church; but being destitute of curtains and bedding, it was a mere paillasse. Everything was inferior to what was used by the king's soldiers.

A witch required little.

All shrunk from her now; even Lady Cranstoun Riddel, who had formerly been so kind, avoided her; while her husband, the governor, having before his eyes the wrath of the king and the cardinal (who was more dreaded than ten kings), also remained aloof. Thus no visitor ever disturbed her sad and solitary reflections, save the under warder, who came hastily and stealthily to deposit her food—a coarse bannock and water tinged with a little wine—and as hurriedly withdrew, fearing to meet a glance of her eye—for witches were thought to possess eyes of evil power.

The coarse bannock, the sole food offered her, remained untasted, for it was salt and bitter; the water was her only nourishment, for assuredly it contained but little wine; as the warder, who prepared it, drank the greater part; for a sorceress, who was to be burned in three days, might do very well, he thought, without wine.

Thus agony of mind, pain of body, and lack of food, had sorely reduced her. She became apathetic, and sank into a stupor so deep, that it seemed as if no change of circumstances could ever tranquillize or restore her to existence and the sunshine of life.

Her large dark eyes were dry, hot, and tearless. In their stony aspect, they seemed never to have beamed in joy, or wept in grief. Her face had the pallor, the lividity of death, and her cheeks had become frightfully hollow, while her thin lips were a vivid and unnatural scarlet. They seemed to have shrunk, and showed more than before of her teeth ; and even these seemed larger and, if possible, whiter than usual. There was something dry, arid, and parched in her whole aspect—as if the fire of inward grief was consuming her. As her stooped head rested on her hand, with eye fixed and jaw relaxed, her expression, at times, grew altogether vacant.

She had on the same dress in which she had appeared before Abbot Mylne and his tribunal, and the same pretty little angular cap, below which her fine hair was simply braided. She was destitute of ornament, having been robbed or deprived of all her rings and bracelets by Sanders Screw and others, into whose hands she had been so ruthlessly consigned.

Her haggard beauty was appalling, as the calmness of her despair was unnatural. Her whole mind seemed to be unhinged.

Her cheek reclined in the hollow of her right hand, and her elbow rested on the table ; her vacant gaze was fixed on the landscape, which extended to the north and westward, for her chamber had two windows, and from the west the cool, soft wind played on her hot, white cheek, and lifted her heavy hair.

The glorious plain, that from the foot of the steep Castle Rock stretches almost to the gates of busy Glasgow, was yet hazy with the humid summer mist, from amid which stood boldly forth the lordly Pentlands with their peaks of brilliant emerald green, or heath of russet brown, and the rugged rocks of Corstorphine; while afar off, and dim in the distance, among the Highlands of Stirlingshire, rose the pale blue cone of Ben Lomond, the king of the Scottish hills, then the fastness of the fierce Buchanans.

The sun was sinking behind the Ochils, and those who have seen it so sink behind those beautiful mountains in summer, will cease to boast of Roman skies and Venetian sunsets. A thousand hills, and isles, and rocks were mirrored in the bosom of the Forth, as a flood of sunlight was poured along its winding waters, kissing the wooded shores and dancing waves, throwing into light its bold headlands and forest vistas, or into partial shade the long deep glens and forest dells, where herd and hirsle grazed, "and the wee burnie was stealing under the lang yellow brume," as a beautiful old song has it.

Rock, isle, and ship seemed floating on its bosom, amid all the sparkling colours of the sun, till it sank behind the mountains, leaving a million of radiations shooting upward behind the dark peak of Dumyat. Then the Forth turned from gold to blue, and its shores from green to purple; and then, as the hills of Fife grew dark, the Lothian woods grew darker still, and the gentle star of evening arose above Corstorphine to replace, by its mild beauty, the brighter glories of the day that had passed.

Of all this magnificent effect of scenery and of sunset, Jane saw nothing; for her eyes were turned back

(as it were) within her heart, and she saw only her own thoughts. The events of the last few weeks seemed all a horrible dream—a dream from which she had yet to awaken. A chaos, incoherent, and fantastic, like the time of a fever and delirium. Amid this chaos came forth the image of Roland—Roland who was ever uppermost in her thoughts. Where was he? What was he doing? Or what had been done with him since that frightful day when, under twenty weapons, she had seen him beaten down and slain, as she then thought, before her very eyes.

She considered, then, the doom to be endured—the punishment by fire. She remembered the burning of Sir David Straitoun and of Father Norman Gourlay, two hapless Protestants, who, on the 27th of August, three years before, had suffered martyrdom at the Rood of Greenside, below the western brow of the Calton; and those who witnessed that frightful *auto-da-fé*, had described how like parchment scrolls the limbs of the victims shrivelled; how their stomachs burst and fell down among the hissing embers; and how the forky flames shot up between their scorched and blackened ribs, and were vomited forth at their open jaws and eyeless sockets, till even the morbid crowd, hardened as they were by the daily executions of that unhappy age, became sick and turned away with horror.

She thought of these things; she grasped her temples and endeavoured to pray; but the terrors of a death so awful paralyzed her, and she could not collect her energies sufficiently to address even that God, before whom she was so shortly to appear. All she had endured, and was then enduring, seemed trifles to the sufferings that were yet to come—the stake—the faggots!

The strong chain that secured her wrists to each other, retaining them a yard apart, and that yet stronger fetter which secured her left ankle to the wall of her bed, holding her in childlike helplessness; the frequent entrance of Sanders Screw and his assistants, or the equally brutal warders, outraging and violating all her privacies by day and by night; the desertion of her friends; her hopelessness of rescue, of mercy, and of life, were all merged in the terrors of her coming execution.

"Three days! three days! three days! my God! Oh my God!" she exclaimed, "only three days!"

And falling on her knees, she buried her face in her hands; but, poor being! her thoughts were too incoherent for utterance, or relief in prayer.

To one in such extreme misery, death could not in itself be very appalling; but it was the thought of Roland, of her mother, of her brother, of her family honour, and her own blighted name—blighted at least for a time, by the studied vengeance of one whom she deemed all but insane, that racked her heart with agony; while the mode of death by which she was to die, filled her whole soul with terror. Of its ignominy she thought little; for she had a bright certainty that her innocence would one day be asserted, if not by the blessed hand of Heaven, by the good sword of her gallant lover—for Jane Seton thought like a true Scottish woman of the sixteenth century.

While stooping over the only chair her chamber contained, on her knees, and in the paroxysm we have described, some one, whose entrance she had not heard, touched her on the shoulder. She looked up with a stupified aspect, and beheld John of the Silvermills, with his long solemn beard, portentous visage and wizard-like cap, embroidered with the emblems of the Trinity,

eternity, and religion—the triangle, the circle, and the cross. He wore a long black cassock-coat, trimmed with white fur ; a large pouch hung at his girdle, and he leaned on a walking staff. He raised his high cap, and partly with respect, and partly with fear, assisted her to rise and to seat herself.

Jane had become so faint, and had sunk so much since the day of trial, that the unglutted and unmerciful authorities feared she might escape the fangs of justice, by dying before the festival of St. Margaret the Martyr—that night to which all Edinburgh, indeed all in the three Lothians, looked forward with tiptoe and morbid expectation : thus the learned and deeply read physician of the royal household, John of the Silvermill (or, as he signs his name in various documents of that age, “ Jhone o’ ye Sillermylne”), was ordered to attend and prescribe for her health.

“ Oh, good Master Apothegar !” she exclaimed, while the tears almost started into her arid eyes at the sight of a face that was familiar, and which seemed to regard her with something akin to commiseration. “ Oh, Master Doctor,” she added, taking his hands in her own, “ dost thou think they will destroy him too ?”

“ Him—who ?” stammered the apothegar, disengaging his lean and bony fingers from her cold and clammy grasp, as gently but decidedly as he could, “ who, madam ?”

“ Sir Roland Vipont,” replied Jane, disdaining to notice this undisguised dread or aversion, though her heart fired at it.

“ Poor butterfly ! whom one more revolution of the wheel of fate will crush—thou thinkest not of thyself——”

“ I think only of him, and of nothing else ; I live

but for him now—'tis three days—only three days!" She added, incoherently, "What is said in the town, at the court, at the palace? Will he be punished for defending me so boldly, so valiantly? My dear Roland—three days—oh, who is like thee? None—and none will ever be like thee!"

"I will recast his horoscope, for I know, lady, the star of his nativity. This night it will be in Azebone, the head of the sixteenth mansion, and by its digression I will judge me of his fate. It will require a long and careful calculation, lady," said the deacon of the apothegars, shaking his long beard, solemnly, "and yet, gramercy me! I have known as mickle foreseen by coscinomancy, which meaneth divination by a sieve; but *that*, as thou knowest, is altogether beneath one like me, who knoweth the difference of sublimities and the distance of the stars."

"Oh, Roland—Roland!" murmured Jane (who understood not a word of all this), as she pressed her trembling hands upon her heart, "I love thee now with the love of the unfortunate; and that, indeed, is a strong love, for by few are the unfortunate loved in return."

"Thy pulse is quick and low," said the physician, placing his bony fingers on her white and slender wrist, which was fretted and chafed by the detestable manacle that encircled it; "thou sighest deeply, thou flushest and becomest chilly by turns. Is thy tongue dry, and is thy brain giddy? Yes, I know they are. By the mass, I know thou art intensely feverish. Now the pulse flutters, and the skin becomes moist—fever—fever—nervous fever! Didst thou take the metheglin my servitor brought thee?"

"Yes," said Jane, mechanically.

"Ah! and were much the better thereof?"

" I really do not know."

" Ah, you must have been ; 'tis a compound of wort, herbs, honey, and spices, forming a wondrous and soothing restorative."

" What need of a restorative, sir? In three days all will be over."

" We know not what the womb of Time may bring forth, lady : for, verily, it is fruitful of events."

" Oh, that Father St. Bernard was here !" thought Jane ; " how terrible this cold physician is !"

" Continue the metheglin," said her adviser, putting on his conical cap, and resuming his staff, " and from this phial, take daily one karena, whilk meaneth, the twentieth part of a drop——"

" Sir, thou art most kind : but remember that in three days I shall be beyond the reach of thy skill ; so farewell, and omit not to pray for me."

" Such is life !" replied the other, dreamily. " Oh, that my elixir were complete, and then all mankind might live for a thousand years—even as Artesius, the godlike Artesius, lived ! A thousand learned doctors have withered up their brains searching for this elixir ; but there is not one among them to whom Heaven hath been so propitious as myself. Rejoice with me, lady, rejoice ! for it is nearly complete ! Having failed to discover an herb or mineral to finish it, I have plunged into the mazes of entomology ; for there are many insects whose brains or bodies, wings or claws, possess charms of potency. Moses, Solomon, Hippocrates, and Aristotle, found wondrous properties in locusts and creeping things ; and Ælian, the Greek, expatiates at great length on those contained in the brains and tongues of crickets, wasps, and cantharides ; and there were Democritus, Neoptolemus, Philistus, Nicander,

Herodius, to say nothing of Albertus Magnus (whose book printed at Venice in 1519, has just been sent to me by the Spanish ambassador), all of whose writings I have yet to search; and doubt not, lady, that therein I must discover that which shall complete my elixir, and make my poor little laboratory, at the hamlet of Silver-mills, more famous by a thousand degrees, than ever was that of Claudius Galenus, the physician of Pergamus."

And with this flourish, after reiterating his directions concerning that precious decoction, which he styled metheglin, to be taken with one karena from the phial, this homœopathist of the sixteenth century withdrew, leaving the poor little captive stupified and stunned by the energy and fustian of his conversation.

CHAPTER XV.

DAVID'S TOWER—THE PRIEST.

"There's but one part to play; shame has done hers,
But execution must close up the scene;
And for that cause these sprigs are worn by all,
Badges of marriage, now of funeral."

ROWLEY'S *Noble Soldier*, 1634.

As the physician retired, Father St. Bernard, Jane's confessor, and daily visitor, and of all the hundreds whom she knew, her only friend, glided softly in, and approached; for such was the terror excited by the accusations against her, that neither Marion Logan, nor Alison Hume, had dared to visit her; though they had sent many a message, saying, "how they wept and prayed for her," and so forth.

She raised her heavy head, and with an expression almost of joy, extended her hands towards him; but the ponderous fetters weighed them down.

The priest lifted the chain, and smiled sadly but kindly upon her.

"*Pax Domine sit semper vobiscum*," said he, making use of his invariable phrase.

"Good Father St. Bernard!" she exclaimed, "can this be the work of Heaven or of the fiend?"

"Of the fiend, daughter—canst thou doubt it?"

"I endure agony that is unutterable when thinking of Roland and of my mother. Oh, that she might hear nothing of all this! I have yet so much to suffer!——

The old priest covered his face with the wide sleeve of his cassock, and wept, for he had still warm and acute feelings, though a long and ascetic life had somewhat blunted them and estranged him from the world.

"Can a merciful Heaven afflict me thus, father?"

"Hush, lady; whatever his miserable creatures may do, God is ever merciful and just. We know not but this visitation, terrible though it is, may be the means of averting some still greater calamity."

"Can any calamity be greater than death?"

"To the unrepentant? no. But pray, child, pray; for the Christian gathers hope from his prayers, while the poor heretic dies despairing and blaspheming."

"Good Father St. Bernard, if I could have been base—if I could have stooped, and been coward enough to abandon my poor Roland, and wed this frantic, this furious persecutor, all this misery might not have happened. It is a frightful alternative—a terrible reflection!"

"My good child, fear nothing and regret nothing. Think of St. Thekla, and of all she endured for shunning the love of one she detested; and now let the bright example of her whom St. Isidore of Pelusium styled the protomartyr of her sex, and the most glorious ornament of the apostolic age, be as a star and a beacon to thee. Shall I tell thee her story, as an old monk of Culross told it to me?"

Jane bowed her head, in token of assent.

"She was the pupil of St. Paul," said the prebendary, gathering energy as he spoke, "and, amid pagans, grew

in holiness like a flower in the desert. Men called her beautiful, but she was good as she was beautiful, and gentle as she was good. A young noble of Lycaonia loved her ; but the love of God, sayeth St. Gregory of Nyssa, burned too strongly in her bosom to admit of a human passion. She repelled his love, and, by the practice of every austerity, overcame all earthly affections, and subdued her passions in such wise that she became dead to the world, living upon it, but not in it—as a beautiful spirit, but one having no kindred feeling to those around her. The most endearing caresses, the most ardent protestations, the most brilliant flatteries and gorgeous presents failed to win her love to this young noble ; and lo ! from tender persuasions he betook himself to the most terrible threats ; and thereupon, abandoning the stately house of her father, with its Grecian luxuries, its chambers of marble, with gilded ceilings and silken carpets, its Tyrian hangings, precious sculpture, and vessels of fine gold ; abandoning home, friends, country, everything, she retired into the recesses of a forest to pray for Greece, and to commune with the God of the Christians amid silence and solitude ; for such was the blessed example of the apostles.

“ But there her lover, the young Lycaonian, discovered her ; and, full of wrath and vengeance, accused her of certain heinous crimes before the magistrates of Isauria, who sentenced her to be torn limb from limb and devoured by wild beasts, in the public amphitheatre of the city. The day of doom arrived ; and, naked in that vast arena, with no other covering than her innocence, and her long flowing hair that almost enveloped her, this tender being was exposed to twice ten thousand eyes. Undaunted in heart, and high in soul, she stood calmly awaiting her fate from the fangs of those wild

animals whom goads of steel had urged to frantic madness, and whose deep hoarse bellowing filled even the morbid multitude with dismay.

"The iron gates were withdrawn, and the mighty assemblage were awed and frozen into silence, when three enormous lions and three gigantic panthers, with manes erect and eyes of fire, bounded into the wide arena, where the helpless virgin stood in all her purity and resignation. With a simultaneous howl they rushed upon her ; but lo ! the mighty hand of Heaven was there ! The lions forgot their ferocity, and the panthers the rage of their hunger ; and gently as lambs they crouched before St. Theckla, and grovelled in the dust to lick her snow white feet.

"The vast multitude, their cruel magistrates, and the more cruel Lycaonian lord, were overcome at the sight of this wondrous miracle, and permitted her to depart in peace ; and she died, at an extreme old age, in Seleucia, where, above her grave, may yet be seen the church of the first Christian emperors."

Jane listened attentively, and with the utmost good faith, to this legend. It was one of the many miraculous tales which then formed the staple subjects for the discourses of the old clergy on Sundays and festival days.

"I thank you for this bright example," said she, "but I am altogether unlike St. Theckla, for I am not above an earthly passion ; and none know how dearly and how truly I love him to whom I am betrothed. Just Heaven ! I have all that last frightful day yet vivid in my memory. The court, so calm, so orderly, so formal, so satisfied with themselves, and so full of morbid curiosity ; the spectators' countless eyes ; the judges, so serious and so solemn ; their ten sworn advocates, so silent and so dreamy ; and those cold-eyed

clerks of court who gazed at me from time to time so stolidly, and with a self-satisfied air—at me, a poor helpless creature, abandoned to them, overwhelmed with desperation, and blind with fear and sorrow.”

“Would that I could die for thee, Lady Jane. I am but a poor old prebendary; the years of my life are many, though the days of my joy have been few—few indeed. I would leave no one to weep for, and have none that would weep for me. I have long been sick of the world; I have nothing in it now to regret, and, save thyself, know none that would regret old Father St. Bernard, unless I add a few aged almspeople, my poor penitents. My time in it cannot be long now, and willingly would I give my life for thine, if such a thing might be. Oh, my child, thou so nobly born, so carefully nurtured, so innocent and so gentle, the most guileless and most docile of my penitents! Oh, this vile man, this Redhall, is a fiend! a monster!” exclaimed the priest, suddenly giving way to unwonted passion; “may the heaviest curses of God fall upon him! May he inherit the leprosy of Gehazi, and the despair of Judas! May the earth swallow him up, like Dathan and Abiram! May he sorrow like Cain, and may the wrath of God ever be upon him for the misery his unbridled passions, his blind vengeance and savage hate, have caused unto thee!”

“Alas! good Father St. Bernard,” said the gentle being, terrified by the old man’s energy, “ought we not rather to pray for him?”

“Thou art right, my daughter, and thy resignation shames me!” replied the priest, whose indignation had, for a moment, borne away his better feelings. “Right, right—we are commanded to pray for those who persecute and despitefully use us. Thou good soul!” he

added, signing the cross upon her brow, "may the angel of all purity watch over thee, for thou, in thy goodness of heart, art more like unto the angels than mortals."

"But oh! that mode of death—by fire—by fire! It is so frightful!"

"The good should fear nothing. The hand which tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, may temper the flames to thee."

She cowered her face in her hands, and began to weep. Her tears relieved her.

"And I must really die—so young! Oh, Roland—Roland!"

"Child, thou thinkest more of him than of the will of Heaven. There is a sin in this."

"Heaven's will be done, father. I am not a heroine."

"Its ways are inscrutable," replied the priest, looking upward.

"Hast thou not even once seen Roland, father?"

"Roland, again!"

"Pardon me, but I cannot help it. I fear his name will be the last on my lips—his image the last in my heart. Oh, forgive me this; but I cannot help it."

"They have accused him of treason."

"But there is hope of mercy for him, surely?"

"The proud are ever ungrateful; and say, who can count on the gratitude of kings? They may forget; but God never forgets."

"Another day has come and gone—a bright one it has been to all the world but poor Roland and me; the air so soft, so bright, so balmy; the leaves so green, the water so blue, the flowers so fresh and smiling. Can all my griefs be possible? Another day, and another—and where shall I be then?"

alive, when demanded, under a penalty of ten thousand merks.

Deprived of everything in the shape of weapons, even to his spurs, the lover sat with his arms folded on his breast, his chin (which exhibited an untrimmed beard) resting on his breast, his brows knit, and his eyes full of fire, revolving, as he had been for the last two days and a sleepless night, and re-revolving in anger and grief, a myriad of futile projects.

“Gloomy as death, and desolate as hell,”

his thoughts were too impetuous and incoherent to take any permanent or useful form ; but when his eyes rested on the enormous iron grating which secured his window, or endeavoured to fathom the tremendous abyss that yawned below—that abyss where the loch was rolling, every hope died within him, and he became sick ; while the reflection made him become frantic, that though he remained inert, secured and shut up within a few feet of him there breathed, suffered, and wept, one whom he loved to adoration.

All his recent adventures in Douglasdale—the storming of Fleming the farmer’s barmkyn—the poisoning of Nichol Birrel—the horrors of his return—the trial—his defiance of the court—his challenge, and its rejection, had all passed away from his memory, which retained but one episode, one vision—Jane, as she appeared before that cruel and determined tribunal—so pale, so ghastly, so helpless, and so beautiful.

The recollection was a frightful one.

“And the king, he who loved me so well,” thought he ; “has he too forgotten me ? James Stuart—James Stuart ! the Douglasses have said truly, thou art ungrateful ; and more truly and more wisely hath the

good old countess said unto me a hundred times, 'Put not your trust in princes.' Who now thinks of the ancient wealth and valour of the Viponts?—who of their courage and patriotism? The honour of their name lies buried in the church of St. Colme, and beneath the moss that clusters on Aberdour—my patrimony gifted many a year ago to the grasping house of Morton. How unhappy am I! My whole life has been a struggle between poverty and pride, earning by wounds, and blood, and toil, hardly and severely, at sword's point, every penny that clinked in my pouch; for I have been a soldier of fortune, or misfortune rather, from my boyhood to the present hour. But have I not had some bright moments too? Ah, yes—yes! those I have passed with Jane—with my dear Jeanie; but they have been like the meteors that have shot over a dark winter sky; they are passed now, and a double gloom remains behind."

His apartment had two windows, one which opened to the west, and another to the north; and through both shone the last flush of the red sunset.

Now two voices beneath the west window, by attracting his attention, interrupted his sad thoughts, and he listened.

The speakers were in familiar conversation; but there was something so hateful in their tones, that his heart trembled with rage as he recognised them; and impelled alike by hatred and a fearful curiosity, he drew near to listen.

In an angle of the ramparts, where the curtain wall joined a corner of the tower, the two gossips were seated on the stock of a large brass culverin: they were Nichol Birrel and Sanders Screw.

The yellow, livid visage, matted hair, and enormously

thick beard of the former, and the shrivelled legs, nut-cracker visage of the latter, were distinctly visible in the clear summer twilight; and there was a broad grin on the face of each as they conversed on a subject which, as it was pecuniary, interested them both in a high degree.

"Twenty merks and fifteen mak five and thirty merks," said Birrell, counting on his huge misshapen fingers.

"Ay," responded Screw, with another wide grin, as he held a piece of paper up to the light, which came from the west.

"The deil!" said Birrel, "ye dinna mean to pretend that ye can *read*, friend Sanders?"

"No, but I ken ilka item off by heart."

"Let me hear, then."

"First," said Sanders, pointing with a finger to the crumpled paper, which he ogled with the corners of his bleared eyes, as he indicated each item in succession, "first: 'Accompt of the haill expenses for ye burning of Lady Jean Seton, umquhile of Ashkirk, at ye staik, Saint Margaret's Day, fifteen hundred and thirty-seven——'"

"Weel?"

"Hoolie, man!" responded Sanders, scratching his head. "*Item*; for one staick of aik tree, a penny.

"'*Item*; for twelve bundles o' faggots, saxpence.

"'*Item*; for three barrels o' tar and tallow, ten shillings.

"'*Item*; for greased flax and gunpowder, sax shillings.

"'*Item*; for an iron chain to bind her to the staik, twenty Flemish rydars.

"'*Item*; for a pair o' steel branks and one padlock,

to Jhone, the lorimar, at ye Tron, aucht shillings of our Scots monie. *Summa——'*”

“Hech! ye’ll hae gude profit off a’ this; for I ken ye saved as mickle tar, flax, and faggots frae the burning and worrying o’ fat Father Macgridius as will put ye owre this job, and mair.”

“Never *you* heed that,” replied Sanders, pawkily; “how mickle got ye for the brodding o’ her?”

“Sax pund Scots.”

“Sax pund! my certie, think o’ that! Witch pricking is profitable wark.”

“Had ye seen Friar Gourlay,” said Dobbie, with a leer, as he came up and joined them, “by my faith! *he* burned brawly when the cardinal had him harled to the Calton and worrit for his foul heresies. We put a tarred frock on him, sewit ower wi’ bags o’ grease and powder, and piled the weel oiled faggots knee-deep about him. We then fastened up his body to the stake by three iron cask-hoops that held him erect as a lance, and the fire bleezed round him like a war beacon. His yell and skirls were awsome to hear; but the smoke and the heat soon chokit him; and then, when the breeze blew the fire aside, we saw him standing upright and stark in the middle o’t. Then his belly fell out, and the flames shot up between his birselled ribs and out at his scouthered jaws, his eyen and ear-holes! By my soul! gossip Birrel and gossip Screw, it was an awsome sight, and one to haud in memorie!” Even Dobbie, connoisseur as he was in these matters, shuddered at the recollection of this extra-judicial atrocity.

“But come,” said Birrel, “there is St. Cuthbert’s bell striking ten, and we have muckle to do wi’ this dame ere morning peeps.”

The trio then knocked at the iron gate of David’s Tower, to which they were admitted.

Roland had heard but a part of their frightful conversation ; it was beyond the power of human endurance to listen to all those wretches said. He rushed into the farthest corner of his apartment, covered his ears with his hands, and wept and groaned aloud in the utter impotency of his rage and grief. But how much wilder would that rage and grief have been, had he known that they were all gone to visit his hapless mistress, for the double purpose of performing some of those additional tortures to which those accused of sorcery were usually subjected, by order of the supreme tribunal in Scotland, and at the same time to accomplish another cruel plan of Sir Adam Otterburn's device.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOON.

“ Now is't a deed of mercy brings thee here,—
 Of mercy to a suffering fellow man,
 Or is't his rank that summons all thy pity,
 And lends thy tongue its load of eloquence ?”

Old Play.

On leaving King David's Tower, Father St. Bernard passed through the Spur, by the Castle Port, and descended the Castlehill-street into the city.

The bells tolled the hour of nine in the Maison Dieu, at the head of Bell's Wynd, as he passed it, and he saw the lights gleaming in the chapel of this edifice, which stood on the south side of the High-street.

The vast height of its buildings cast a dusky shade over this thoroughfare; and the steep narrow closes which diverged on each side from it, were almost buried in obscurity. In each of the small round archways, which gave admittance to these deep and ghostly alleys, when the night advanced an oil lamp was lighted, a remarkable improvement at this early period, when neither London nor Paris could boast of such an advance in civilization, for which our citizens were solely indebted to their good king James V.

Finding that Edinburgh was becoming a place of

resort from all parts of the kingdom, in 1532, the monarch so far influenced the town council, that the High-street was well paved with large stones, quarried among the Craigs of Salisbury. Many of the more ancient tenements were removed, renovated, or made more ornamental; while, as before stated, the citizens had to hang out lanterns to light the narrow thoroughfares; but as these were made of horn and were fed with oil, they shed but a dim and wavering radiance on the enormous stone bastilles and overhanging Flemish fronts, which are still the leading features of the old grey city of the Stuarts and Alexanders.

The watching was performed by the burghers. Every man within the barriers being on guard every fourth night; thus the whole citizens had to perform military service in rotation, armed as infantry soldiers of the period, with helmet, corslet and steel gloves, arquebuse and dagger, or with sword, poleaxe, and partizan. The citizens of Edinburgh enjoyed the distinction of wearing "quhite hatts," *i. e.*, helmets of burnished steel; and the whole were arrayed under their baillies four times in the year at a general weaponshow; but to return.

The prebendary descended the Blackfriars Wynd, at the foot whereof projected the turret which still indicates the cardinal's dwelling. Grasped by the teeth of a grotesque stone monster, a lantern hung above the doorway, and lighted a large stone panel, whereon were carved and gilded the armorial bearings of Bethune of Balfour, overshadowed by the cardinal's tasselled hat. Here the poor priest paused for a moment, and muttered a fervent prayer for the success of his merciful errand, and then he tirmed the pin, timidly at first, but boldly afterwards.

After a brief reconnoissance being made of his person through the vizzying hole, the door was opened by one of the cardinal's guards, who wore the arms of the archbishopric on the breast of his purple doublet.

"Is his eminence at home?"

"Yea, Father," replied the pikeman, falling back a pace, with a profound salute.

"Please to announce that Father St. Bernard of St. Giles, craves the honour of speaking with him alone."

"Deliver this message to my young Lord Lindesay," said the pikeman to another of the guard, who had overheard the request; and in less than a minute, that young noble, who was the betrothed of Beaton's daughter, and who acted as his page and equerry, appeared, bonnet in hand.

"His eminence desires me to say, that Father St. Bernard is welcome at all times," said he.

Ascending the narrow stone stair of this antique mansion, and preceded by young Lindesay, whose crimson velvet mantle and peach-coloured doublet were covered with glittering embroidery, the prebend, on passing through an opening in a gorgeous arras, found himself of presence of the primate of all Scotland, the legate of Paul III.

Brilliantly lighted by candles of perfumed wax, which burned in rose-coloured globes of Venetian glass, the chamber, in which we had the honour of introducing the reader to the foe of Henry VIII., and the terror of the Calvinists, to the eye of the poor priest, formed a striking contrast to his own humble dormitory at St. Giles; but he was not a man to permit such thoughts to dwell an instant in his mind; and dismissing them at once, he knelt before the cardinal's chair, to kiss the white

hand which that great and luxurious prince of the church extended graciously towards him.

He was seated in a large and easy chair of stuffed velvet; his feet were encased in slippers of morocco, red as his stockings, and rested on a gilded footstool. Two vases of Italian glass, exquisitely carved, and glittering with the golden-coloured and purple wine they contained, together with two silver baskets, one full of honied biscuits and the other of grapes, showed that his eminence had been solacing his solitary hour; for a ghittorn that lay on a chair announced that his daughter, the Lady Margaret, had just retired, and the young Lord Lindesay, having no occasion to remain, followed her; thus the priest found himself alone with the cardinal, before whom all his confidence vanished; for despite his conscious rectitude of heart and goodness of intention, in presence of the second man in Scotland, the poor prebend became timid as a child.

"Welcome, Father St. Bernard!" said the cardinal, pointing to a seat near his own: "you look pale and fatigued. Here are red and white Italian wines, and these are better than our ordinary Rochelle or Bourdeaux. To which shall I have the pleasure of assisting you? and then we will to business after; for I am certain thou hast come to me on business; no one," continued the studious cardinal, closing a book he had been reading, "no one, save my Lord Lindesay, comes near David Beaton for mere friendship, I find. Red wine or white?"

"Either, please your eminence—the flask that is next you."

Reassured by the frank manner of the cardinal, and by the luscious *Greco* that moistened his tongue, which

had been parched and dry, St. Bernard was about to speak, when the cardinal again addressed him.

"Dost thou come with new tidings of this Calvinistic heresy, which spreadeth, even as foul leprosy, over Scotland; or," he added, re-opening his volume, which was *The Franciscan*, of George Buchanan, "or comest thou merely here, as this arch heretic sayeth, to exhibit—

"the greasy shaven head,
A gloomy friar, with flowing gown outspread!
The twisted girdle, and the hat's broad brim,
The opened shoe dressed out in monkish trim;
Below the garb, where we so oft will find,
A brutal tyrant, whom no law can bind;
The robber who oppression's armour wields,
The sensual glutton, to excess who yields,
To deck the husband's brow, the night will spend;
The faithless lover, and deceitful friend!
His modest face, though false, worn as a cloak,
To gull the plebeian, and delude the flock;
Ten hundred thousand crimes, wild, dark, and deep
He hides beneath the clothing of the sheep!"—

"Holy mother of God!" exclaimed the cardinal (who had read this passage ironically and emphatically), as he flung the volume to the farthest end of the apartment, "and thou permittest this wretch to encumber the earth! Holy St. Francis of Assisium! thou whose life was a miracle of humility; who, in a glorious vision beheld our Saviour hanging on his cross, and thou hast permitted the heretic dog, who writes thus of thy clergy, again to escape me!"

"I heard that he had broken forth from your eminence's archiepiscopal castle of St. Andrew's, some months ago."

"True,—while my guards (the drunken rascals!)

slept; but I should have made them answer for him body for body. Truly, the college of St. Barbe hath reason to be proud of its professor, this learned Buchanan, for there he is at present teaching grammar and the humanities; and now I hear that the Earl of Cassilis (whom I know to be an arch-heretic, traitor, and cor-responder with Henry of England) is about to secure him from me in his castle of Culzean, as a tutor for his son, the Lord Gilbert Kennedy. By the Cross, he is a rare tutor! But let this lord beware; for though he is brother of Quentin Kennedy, that good Abbot of Crossraguell, whose pieties are those of a saint, the people of Scotland shall see whether a cardinal's hat or an earl's coronet will weigh the heavier in the scales of justice and of Heaven."

The cardinal was both exasperated and satirical. Father St. Bernard found that he had chosen an unfortunate time to prefer his request, and while he was rallying all his thoughts to introduce a more pleasing topic of conversation than that broached by the cardinal, the latter said, suddenly, but in a milder tone:

"And now my good old friend, St. Bernard, what dost thou wish me to do for thee?"

"May it please your eminence to grant me your patience and pardon."

The cardinal put one leg over the other, laid his hand upon his wine-cup, and nodded, as much as to say—"Good: I see the reverend father has some request to make of me."

"My Lord Cardinal, dost thou remember the 30th of August, 1534?"

"The 30th of August, 1534!" repeated the cardinal, pondering.

"That 30th of August, when I implored your eminence not to pass through Fife to St. Andrew's."

"I do," said the cardinal, becoming suddenly enimated, "for there were certain mysterious circumstances—but what of that now? 'tis three years ago."

"My lord, I know not whether that which I am about to reveal be a sin, or whether, by so doing, I am breaking the irrevocable seal of confession; the man who told what I am about to relate, made afterwards a public confession, when he was expiring in the streets of Kinghorn, but of all the crowd around him, I alone understood to what he referred—unhappy being!"

"Go on," said the cardinal, sipping his wine, "I am already all ears and impatience."

"On the evening of the 26th of August, just the day before Straitoun and Gourlay were burned for heresy at Greenside, I was seated in the public confessional at St. Giles, when a man entered in great agony of mind, and knelt down before me. This man, my lord, was one whom the secret orations of the Reformers and the mal-influence of his chief, for he was a follower of old Sir John Melville of Raith, had partly led astray from the fold of the true faith. He was James Melville, the gudeman of Pitargie. The blessed hand of God was in it! Like a dark cloud, remorse had descended upon this lost one, and he informed me, that with sixteen others he had sworn to slay your eminence as you passed along the road to St. Andrew's on the morrow; and that this ambuscade of assassins were to be in waiting near the tower of Seafield, to the eastward of Kinghorn. In vain did I command him not to criminate others; but he told me, that your deadliest enemies, John Leslie of Parkhill, Peter Carmichael of Kilmadie,

Sir James Kirkaldy of the Grange, the Melvilles of Raith and of Carnbee, the Lord Rothies, and the Laird of Kinfauns would be there. That Henry of England was in the plot, and had offered them magnificent bribes; and that one of his ships lay cruising at the East Neuk, to secure for these seventeen conspirators a safe retreat to his own dominions, whither they were to bring your eminence's scarlet cope, drenched in blood, as a token that the deed was done, that their lust of vengeance had been sated, and that thou, like another Becket, had fallen beneath their swords.

"As the conscience-stricken assassin proceeded, I became frozen with horror. With groans and with tears he concluded his dark narrative, and beating his breast, implored me to make what use of his confession I pleased, but at all risks to save your eminence. To warn you was impossible, for the confessional sealed my lips! And I saw you—you, the greatest hope of our sinking church, and the chief pillar of the Scottish throne, its bulwark against English aggression, and Henry's grasping and heretical spirit, about to fall! Your eminence was to be shot by arquebusses, after leaving the ferryboat at Kinghorn. After long and deep thought, the penitent begged that I would use all my little influence to detain your Eminence for two hours upon your journey, and you may, perhaps, remember——"

"Thy coming to me on the second day after the *auto-da-fé* at Greenside, and imploring me to delay by two hours my journey into Fife," said the cardinal, as he arose and took in his the hands of the priest. "Thou good and venerable man! I remember well thy diffidence, confusion, and timidity; thy fear of being ridiculed and thy dread of offending me; and how I

railed and stormed at thy superstitious presentiment, as I now remember with regret I named it! Well?"

"At twelve o'clock, on the 30th of August, the knights and gentlemen I have named, with others, to the number of sixteen persons, all fleetly mounted and well armed, with arquebusses and wheel-lock calivers, posted themselves among the copsewood that overhangs certain thick hedge-rows, which lie between Kinghorn and Sir Henry Moultray's tower at Seafield. The king of England's ship, with all her sails set, was verging near the shore, while a Scottish flag, to mask her nation and purpose, was displayed from her mainmast head. The conspirators loaded their fire-arms with poisoned balls, and carefully blew their matches as the bells of St. Leonard's tower tolled twelve. It was the time at which these assassins, who were posted eight on each side of the way, expected your eminence.

"The twelfth stroke of the hour was scarcely given, when they perceived a man, attired exactly like your eminence, in a baretta, cope, and stockings of scarlet, come riding up the narrow horseway, between the dark green hedgerows——"

"What is it thou tellest me? My wraith!"

The priest smiled.

"The seeming cardinal came on, riding fast, as if in advance of his followers: when, lo! sixteen arquebusses and calivers flashed from the screens of thick hawthorn and dark green holly, and prone to the earth fell horse and man, wallowing in their blood."

"*Agnus Dei!*"

"With a shout, the assassins rushed forward to imbrue their hands yet further in blood, and found that they had slain—not David Beaton the cardinal, but one of themselves—Raith's own kinsman, James Melville,

the gudeman of Pitargie! He was carried to Kinghorn, and there, as I have said, he died. Without informing me of his project, further than to delay you, he had thus been guilty of self-immolation, as having no other method of punishing his own crime and saving your eminence. And so you were saved. I delayed you at the pier of Leith for two hours, and at the very moment you embarked, the mock cardinal was shot on the shore of Fife. On returning, your eminence was pleased to remember kindly my warning and presentiment, as you still named it: then, my lord, you promised me, that if ever I wished a boon that was in your power, I should consider it as already granted."

"True—true, my good friend, my reverend brother, I remember it all."

"You spoke of many a deanery, and many a rectory that were vacant, in Angus, Mearns, and Buchan; but I still find myself the poor prebend in the parish kirk of St. Giles——"

"Yes, yes—I feel that I have been ungrateful, and thou justly upbraidest me," said the cardinal, hastily opening a portfolio, "there is the Benedictine Priory of St. Mary, at Fyvie, the superior of which——"

"Nay, Lord Cardinal, nay! Our Lady forbid I should ever presume to upbraid thee. I am but too glad that among the maze of more important matters, my service has been forgotten: and thus that I can still appear as a creditor, and request the fulfilment of your promise."

"Full of shame for having so long forgotten it, I swear to grant whatever you ask, that may lie in my power to bestow."

"Oh, my Lord Cardinal, I seek nothing for myself," said the poor priest, glancing (like Sterne's Franciscan)

at the sleeve of his threadbare garment; "my wants are few, though my years are many, and I have neither desire nor ambition, but in the service of our Master who is in Heaven."

The old man paused, and the great prince of the church, surrounded by wealth and luxury, grasping all but regal power, and loaded by the rank and riches of his Scottish, his French, and Italian titles, felt how great was the gulph between himself and this humble but purer follower of the apostles.

"If in my power," said he, "thy boon is granted."

"I seek the pardon of my poor penitent," replied St. Bernard, clasping his hands: "I seek the pardon of the Lady Jane Seton."

The cardinal started.

"Impossible!" he replied, "for the life of this woman is not in my hands."

"But it is in the hands of the king; and being so, is, I may say, also in thine, my lord. Thou alone canst save her, for, selfish in his grief, our good king has abandoned everything to his ministers."

"Forgiveness for her—a Seton—the daughter of a Douglas, and the grandchild of old Greysteel! Friar, thou ravest! the thing is not to be thought of; besides, from all my lord advocate has told me, she must have been deeply guilty."

"Oh, good my lord cardinal, dost thou, in the greatness of thy mind, conceive that such a crime as sorcery may be?"

"I do not—I believe too implicitly in the power of God, to yield so much to that of his fallen angel; and I believe, that as Calvinism spreads in Scotland, so will this new terror of sorcery. I have not studied the trial, but shall do so to-night, and with care."

"A thousand grateful thanks!"

"Immersed as I am among the affairs of this troublesome state (for its chancellorship costs me dear), and sworn as I am to extinguish by fire and sword the heresies of Calvin, which are spreading like a wildfire among our Scottish towns and glens, I can afford but little time for the consideration of minor matters, such as this trial. Thou art, indeed, an auld farrand buckie," added the cardinal, with a smile; "and well hast thou played thy cards; so rest assured, that if David Beaton can save thy penitent, with justice—*she is saved.*"

Father St. Bernard's heart was too full to reply: he raised his mild eyes to the ceiling, and crossed his wrinkled hands upon his breast.

"On Sunday first, I am to say a solemn mass for queen Magdalene in my cathedral church at St. Andrew's," resumed the cardinal. "Sorely I regret that poor girl's death; but dost thou know that the Scottish church had much to fear from her; for reared and educated as she had been by her almost heretic aunt, the queen of Navarre, she was inclined to view too leniently this clamour raised by the heretics for liberty of conscience, as they are pleased to term their abominable creed—a creed by which they make our blessed Gospels like the bagpipe, on which every man may play a tune of his own devising. On my way to St. Andrew's, I will visit the king at Falkland, and this time, rest assured, my reverend friend, my promise shall not be forgotten."

"Oh, my lord!" murmured the now happy old man; "your eminence overwhelms me."

"There is now little time to lose. Young Balquhan and twenty arquebusiers of the king's guard must accompany me, in addition to the pikemen of my own; and the

moment the pardon or order of release (if I deem her worthy of it, and receive it) is expedite, Leslie shall return with it on the spur to Sir James of Cranstoun-Riddel ;" and, as a sign that the interview was over, the cardinal, with an air of elegance and grace, which he possessed above all the courtiers of his time, gave the priest his jewelled hand to kiss, and thankfully and reverently this good man, who was old enough to be his father, kneeled down and kissed it.

"A thousand blessings on your eminence ! *Dominus vobiscum*," said the priest.

"*Dominus vobiscum, et cum spiritu tuo*," said the cardinal, and stretched out his hand to a silver bell, which he rang.

Hurrying out from an inner chamber, Lord Lindesay drew back the arras which covered the doorway.

Then, as the priest with a joyous heart was about to retire, he was appalled by the spectral figure of Redhall (who had the private *entrée* of the cardinal's apartments at all hours), standing close behind the thick, heavy tapestry.

He started hurriedly forward, and the friar saw but too well that he had not only been listening, but had overheard, perhaps, the whole of their conversation.

His aspect was fearful ; remorse, terror, and despair, had wrought their worst upon him. His jaws had become haggard and his visage pallid ; but the priest thought that he read a gleam of hatred and rage in his eyes as he passed him.

"If he has been listening, and should undo all I have done !" thought St. Bernard, breathlessly, as he hurried down into the dark Wynd of the Blackfriars ; "but his eminence has promised, and blessed be him, my poor little child is saved !"

Full of joy, and feeling as if a mountain had been removed from him, the good old prebend knelt down in the dark and deserted street, and baring his bald head, returned thanks to Heaven and his patron saint for having inclined the lord chancellor to hear favourably the prayer he had just preferred.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THIRST !

" 'Twas thou, O love ! whose dreaded shafts control,
The hind's rude heart, and tear the hero's soul ;
Thou ruthless power, with bloodshed never cloyed,
'Twas thou thy lovely votary destroyed :
Thy thirst still burning for a deeper woe,
In vain for thee the tears of beauty flow."

The Lusiad of CAMOENS. !

AWARE that he had been seen by the friar in the act of listening, the lord advocate decided in a moment upon the course to pursue. He resolved that the promised pardon should *never reach* Edinburgh ; but being too wary to make any reference to the conversation he had just heard, after simply giving the great cardinal a paper concerning an annual subsidy from the clergy, which was to be presented to James V. at Falkland on the morrow, he retired, and hastened to his own house in the Canongate, where, with the utmost impatience, he awaited the return of Nichol Birrel, whom, with Dobbie and Sanders Screw, he had sent on a devilishly contrived mission to the Castle of Edinburgh, whither we shall return to observe them.

From his window Roland had seen them enter David's Tower by the iron gate at the bottom of the

stair, by which they ascended straight to the chamber where Jane Seton was confined.

After the priest had left her, the latter had become more calm, though St. Bernard had not held out to her the faintest hope of mercy or compassion from those powers which had abandoned her to die, or of rescue from that once terrible faction to which her family belonged—that faction now so scattered, crushed, and broken.

In her prison this sad and lonely being had watched the woods and water darkening far below her; had watched the stars as one by one they sparkled out upon the night, and she envied the airy freedom of the passing clouds as they rolled through the sky—the blue twilight sky of a still and beautiful summer gloaming. In masses of fleecy white or pale gold, as they were tinted by the rising moon, they sailed on the soft west wind in a thousand changing forms.

The very weariness of long grief overcame her, and she lay down on the humble pallet afforded her by the orders of the castellan, to sleep—for she had not slumbered during many nights, and on this night, like her thirst, her fatigue was excessive.

Her couch was a mere paillasse, with a pillow; for in everything she was made to feel painfully that she was the—condemned witch!

The bread given her during the two past days had been unusually salt and bitter; she endured great thirst; but the warder had removed the humble vessel that contained the water for her use, and now, without a drop to moisten her parched lips, she lay down to sleep. Her bread had been purposely salted to excess, and thus, having been many hours without a drop of water, her sufferings were greatly increased; and when she slept, there arose before her visions of streams pouring in

white foam, of verdant banks or moss-green rocks, of fountains that gushed and sparkled in marble basins, which most tantalizingly receded or vanished when joyfully she attempted to drink of them. At other times, her kind old mother, or Roland Vipont, with their well-remembered smiles of love, approached her with cups of water or of wine; but these dear forms faded away when the longed-for beverage touched her lips; and then she started and awoke to solace herself with her bitter tears—the only solace of which the cruel authorities could not deprive her.

She slept lightly, as a bird sleeps on its perch; but not so lightly as to hear her prison door opened by the Messrs. Birrel, Dobbie, and Screw, whose faces were made more villanous and sinister by the yellow rays of an oil lamp, which darted upwards upon them. Birrel's visage, square and mastiff in aspect, livid in colour, and surrounded by a forest of sable hair above and below; Dobbie, with the eyes and moustachioes of a cat; and Sanders Screw, though utterly destitute of any such appendages to his mouth, exhibiting in his nutcracker jaws and bleared eyes, a sardonic grin of cruelty and intoxication.

He carried a large Flemish jar, which, strange to say, was brimful of pure cold *water*.

Birrel raised his lamp, the lurid flame of which made yet more livid his yellow visage and ruffian eyes; and its sickly rays shone on the face of Jane; but the calm and divine smile that played upon her thin and parted lips, failed to scare from their purpose these demons, hardened as they were in every species of judicial cruelty.

Jane was dreaming of her lover, and in her self-embodied thoughts originated that beautiful smile.

Softly, but soundly, after all she had endured, this poor victim of superstition and revenge was sleeping now, and dreaming, fondly and joyously—for in a dream every sensation is a thousand times more acute than it could be in reality—dreaming of that long life which was denied her, on this earth at least; she felt on her cheek the kiss of her young and gallant lover; she saw his waving plume and his doublet of cloth of gold; his voice was in her ear, and it murmured of his faith and love, that, like her own, would never die.

Her lips unclosed—an exclamation of rapture would have escaped her, when Birrel's iron fingers grasped her tender arm—and she awoke with a start and a cry of despair.

"Gude e'en to ye, cummer Jean," said he, insolently; "bye ye wauken, or fare ye waur; for gif ye sleep, see, madam the sorceress," and he shook before her eyes the steel brod, or needle, which was the badge of his hateful office.

Seated upon one side of her bed, Jane recoiled from these men, who regarded her with eyes that to her seemed as those of rattlesnakes, for they were pitiless in heart, and merciless as the waves of the sea.

We know not if we possess the power to describe the passages of that night in the vaulted chamber of David's Tower.

In the days of the witch mania in Scotland it was the custom, at the desire of the lord president of the college of justice, of the lord advocate, of the sheriff, or baillie of barony or regality, or whoever had tried and condemned a sorceress, to subject her (even after trial) to a further ordeal; for no persecution, even unto the last hour, was deemed too severe for those unhappy beings who were accused of the imaginary crime of

selling their souls to Satan, and thus irrevocably dooming themselves to a punishment that was everlasting.

Two of the most favourite modes of prolonged torture were, to prevent the prisoner from sleeping by every device that the most infernal ingenuity could suggest, and to feed them on bread salted most liberally, to produce an intense thirst, to assuage which the least drop of water was denied them.

Under this treatment many became insane, for the kirk sessions carried it to the most ferocious excess in the seventeenth century.

On being awakened, and partially recovering from her terror, Jane's first sensation was an inordinate desire for water; her thirst was excessive. Her tongue was parched and painful, for her food during the two past days had been coarse dry wheaten bannocks, rendered bitter by the plentiful supply of salt used in their composition. She had been too much accustomed to the most cruel and unceremonious intrusions, to express her keen sense of the present one, otherwise than by her flashing eyes and dilated nostrils, for her heart swelled with indignation; but, on perceiving the jar in the hands of Sanders Screw, her first thought was to satisfy her thirst, and she implored them to give her a cup of water.

At this plaintive request, a grin spread over the weasel visage of Screw and the cat-like eyes of Dobbie, while Birrel, who was somewhat intoxicated, replied with his habitual tone of insolence—

“By my faith, cummer Jean, ye shall be thirstier and drouthier than even was I in Douglasdale, ere a drop rins ower your craig.”

Screw set down the jar, placing himself between it and their victim. The lamp was also placed on the

floor, and seating themselves around it, Dobbie produced from his wide trunk hose of buckram a pack of dirty and dog-eared cards. Each worthy official then placed beside him a flask of usquebaugh, the cards were dealt round, and the campaign of the night commenced with an old game at which the three might play, and Birrel could cheat to his heart's content, notwithstanding that Dobbie knew the backs as well as the fronts of his favourite pack of cards.

For a time Jane gazed at them with the same startled and dismayed expression that the sudden appearance of three reptiles might have excited; and again she begged a cup of water, for her thirst (which had been increasing the live-long day, and to which her salted food, the drugs of the physician, and the grief that preyed upon her, all alike conduced) had now attained a degree of torture and intensity which hitherto she could not have conceived.

Her entreaties were replied to with laughter; and it seemed as if the sight of the liberal draughts imbibed by the trio from their flasks increased the desire of the poor captive; but her prayers and tears were unheeded, and noisily the game went on.

Two hours passed thus!

The players had drained their flasks, and amid much cursing, quarrelling and vociferation, the loose change had rapidly passed from hand to hand, until the whole, amounting to somewhere about ten crowns, a few fleur-de-lis groats, and white pennies of James III., were lodged in the pouch of Birrel, who trimmed the lamp with his fingers, and offered a brass bodle to each of his companions that the game might begin anew; but, as the cards were being redealt, he perceived that, despite their brutal uproar, overcome by weariness and torture

of mind and body, the unhappy girl had again fallen into an uneasy slumber.

Upon this the brodder arose with a growl, and drawing his needle from its sheath, gave her a severe puncture in the arm. The pain of this made her again, with a shriek, start up wildly from her sitting posture; and, uncovering her snow white arm to the elbow, she found that blood was flowing from the deep incision.

With her imploring eyes full of horror, she turned towards Birrel and endeavoured to speak, but her tongue, which clove to the roof of her mouth, failed, at first, to articulate a syllable; and her lips were hard and dry.

"Did I not tell ye quhat ye nicht expect gif ye dared to sleep," said Birrel, savagely.

She made a gasping effort to speak.

"Water!" she said, in a husky whisper, "water!—a single drop, for the love of God!"

"Oho!" grinned Screw, "the saut bannocks are now telling tales!"

He held the Flemish jar of polished pewter before her eyes, and shook the limpid water till it sparkled in the light.

"The haill o' this is for you, dame Seton," said Birrel, "but there is a sma' bit ceremony to be gone through first."

"Water! water!" moaned Jane, in a whispering voice, feeling as if her throat was scorched, and her dry, parched tongue was swollen to twice its usual size. "Oh, man, man!" she added, clasping her hands, "I will pray for you—I will bless you in my last hour, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul, for one drop, a single drop of water!"

There never was a villain so bad as to be without one

redeeming trait; thus, even Dobbie the doomster had his; and now the piteous tone of Jane's husky voice, her pallid face, her intreating and bloodshot eyes, had stirred some secret chord of human sympathy in the recesses of his usually iron heart. He poured a little water into a cup, and approached her. Jane's eyes flashed with thankfulness and joy; but Birrel dashed away the cup with one hand, and laid the other on his poniard.

Jane uttered a tremulous cry of despair.

"Then false coof and half-witted staumrel!" exclaimed the witchfinder; "is it thus ye obey the orders of Redhall, who is our master? Look ye, good mistress, subscribe this paper and we leave you wi' the water-stoup, to drink and to sleep till your heart is contented. But refuse, and woe be unto ye! For here sit we doon to watch by turns, to keep ye, waking and sleepless, with thirst unslackened, till *the hour of doom*; and so, my Lady Seton, ye have the option; sign and drink, or refuse and suffer."

With one hand he held before her the large and brimming jar; with the other he displayed a paper whereon something was written.

Within the deep jar the water seemed cold and pure, limpid and refreshing; while her thirst was agonizing, and her whole frame felt as if scorched by an internal fire. Her brain was whirling, a sickness was coming over her, and human endurance could withstand the temptation no longer.

For a moment she reflected that it was impossible for any avowal, verbal or written, to make her more utterly miserable or degraded than her sentence had already made her, and aware that nothing now could

change the current of her fate save the royal pardon, of which she had not the shadow of a hope, she could only articulate—

“A pen, a pen!—the water!—the water! I am dying—dying of thirst!”

Promptly Birrel produced a pen, which he dipped in a portable inkstand.

She took it with a trembling hand and paused.

He temptingly poured some of the sparkling water on the floor. A gleam passed over her eyes, and in a moment she placed her name, *Jane Seton*, to the paper, vainly endeavouring, as she did so, to see what the lines written above her signature contained; but there was a mist before her eyes, and now they failed her. She threw away the pen with a shriek, and stretched out her hands towards the vessel of water.

“What would ye think, now, if I spilled it all on the flagstones?” said Birrel, with a grin, as he withheld the jar.

At this cruel threat she could only clasp her hands, and gaze at him in silence.

After enjoying her agony for a few moments, he handed her the jar, from which she drank greedily and thirstily.

“Hechhow!” said Birrel, with a triumphant growl, “now ye drink, cummer, as I drank of the Douglas-burn, at the foot of the Cairntable,” and, extinguishing their lamp, the three wretches retired, and she was left to her own terrible thoughts.

Again and again she drank of the water, but the thrill of delight its coolness and freshness afforded her soon passed away; and setting down the vessel carefully, she gazed at it, and then burst into a passion of tears.

The paper she had signed, what could it mean?

At that moment the clock of St. Cuthbert's church which stood in the hollow far down below the Castle, on the west, struck slowly and solemnly the hour of four, and this sound, as it ascended to her ear, recalled her to other thoughts.

The morning was shining through the rusty grating of her window—the morning of another day. She thought bitterly of the paper she had signed; and deploring her lack of strength and resolution, buried her face in her pillow, and gave way at last to a wild paroxysm of despair.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT THE PAPER CONTAINED.

“Oh, misery!

While I was dragged by an insidious band
Of pyrates—savage bloodhounds—into bondage.
But, witness, heaven! witness, ye midnight hours,
That heard my ceaseless groans, how her dear image
Grew to my very heart!”

The Desert Island, 1760.

SLEEPLESS, and with the horrible conversation of Birrel and Dobbie still tingling in his ears, Roland passed the night in that frame of mind we have endeavoured to describe, though it can be better conceived.

The morning dawned, and the thick gratings of the windows appeared in strong relief against the saffron sky, and sounds of life arose from the waking city below. The bright sun was gilding the vane of St. Giles, the spire of the Dominicans, the square tower of St. Mary-in-the-Fields, and the lofty summits of the town, while, like a golden snake, the Forth was seen winding afar between the wooded mountains of the west.

With arms folded, his head sunk upon his breast, and his hollow eyes fixed dreamily on the floor, Roland

was immersed in a chaos of gloomy thoughts, when the noise occasioned by a hand raising a window opposite startled him. He looked up, and a letter fell at his feet.

He clutched and tore it open.

"Jane! from Jane—from my dear Jane?" he exclaimed, huskily, and pressed her signature to his lips. "It is signed by herself (how well I know that dear signature!) but another has written it—St. Bernard perhaps. Ah, my God! she is too ill to write, and they separate me from her. Jane—Jane!"

Now Sir Roland Vipont, though a poor gentleman and soldier of fortune of the sixteenth century, knew enough of scholarcraft (which, like every other craft, was not held then in much repute) to enable him to decipher the letter of Jane Seton, or rather that letter which, by the order of Redhall, Birrell had compelled her to sign by the bribe alternately offered and withheld—a draught of cold water.

For a time there was an envious mist before the hot dry eyes of Roland Vipont; and thrice he had to pause before he so far recovered his energies as to be able to read this epistle, which had been thus delivered to him by the hand of a friend, as he did not doubt. Literally, it ran as follows:

"MINE OWN SWEET HEART, SIR ROLAND,

"Abandoned now by my evil Mentor, and inspired by the blessed saints, who know all things, uninfluenced by any man, and of mine own free will, I hereby confess, certify, and make known unto you, that I have indeed been guilty of the sorcery and witchcraft of which I am accused; and that queen Magdalene died by the same magic and power of enchantment

which forced thee to love me. Thus, the strong regard thou bearest me is in no way attributable to any beauty, manner, or apparent goodness, with which nature hath gifted me; but solely to my diabolical arts and sorceries. At this thou wilt be sorely grieved, but cannot be surprised, mine own sweet heart, when thou thinkest of the myriad infernal deeds that are permitted by heaven and brought about by the instigation of Satan, to whom I have borne more than one brood of imps. I saw that thou wert simple, guileless, good, and brave; and thus were fitted to fall easily into my snares, where many have fallen before thee; but heaven, by revealing my sins, hath saved thee in time. And I do further confess that I am a false traitor, a dyvour heretic and renouncer of my baptism. Written for me, by a learned clerk, at the Castle of Edinburgh, the 17th day of July, in the year of God I^m V^o xxxvii.

“JANE SETON.”

“My Jane! my Jane! oh this is hell’s own work!” exclaimed the unhappy young man; who became stricken with terror at avowals which were so startling and so well calculated to make a deep impression on any man, and on any mind of his time, when a belief in the power of the devil was so strong. “This agony, and not the love I bear thee, is the work of sorcery. It is a forgery—I will never believe it; and yet her signature is there! and after trial, when torture, shame, and agony were past, what could bring forth an avowal such as this? Oh, what but remorse for deceiving one who had loved thee so well! The mother of fiends! she so good, so charitable, so religious, who never missed a mass, or festival. I shudder and laugh at the same moment! A sorceress—Jane where is

the Jane I loved—the good and gentle? She confront the terrors of hell—the touch of Satan?—impossible—frenzy and folly; and yet, and yet, and yet my brain is turned, and I feel as if a serpent had thrust its head into my heart.”

Thus thought Roland, incoherently.

All the implicit trust of a lover, and the blind chivalric devotion of a true gentleman of the year 1537, failed to bear up Vipont against the chilling superstition which then overshadowed every mind and everything, and which tinges the writings of the most subtle casuists and philosophers of those days; and assuredly one could not expect much deep casuistry or philosophy either to be exhibited by Roland, whose school had been the camp, and whose playground in boyhood had been the corpse-strewn battle-fields of France and Italy. It was an age of fairy spells and magic charms, mysterious omens, and gliding spectres—of ten thousand deadly and now forgotten terrors; and we must enter fully into the feelings of the age to appreciate or conceive the frightful effect this unsought for and unexpected avowal of supernatural crime produced upon the mind of Roland Vipont.

His first impulse was to stigmatize the letter as the most deliberate of forgeries, to rend it into a hundred fragments, and to scatter them from the window on the waters of the loch below; but the memory of the words those fragments contained, and their terrible import, remained as if written with fire upon his soul, and wherever he turned he saw them palpably before him; thus, at times, the most cruel doubts were added to his former despair.

He felt that his mental agony was rapidly becoming too great for endurance; and he shrunk, as it were,

back within himself with terror at the idea that he might become insane.

The pride of his strong and gallant heart—a heart that had never quailed amid the boom of cannon and the shock of spears, the rush of charging squadrons and the clang of descending swords—was now bowed down; and covering his face with his hand, he wept like a child, and with that deep and deathlike agony that can only be known by the strong man when forced to find a refuge and relief in tears.

Redhall, that tiger-heart, had calculated well and deeply. The sight of those tears, produced by the letter he had so cruelly and so subtly contrived, would have been as balm to his heart, and as “marrow to his bones;” for he laughed aloud when Nichol Birrel, by dawn of day, related, in exaggerated terms, the agony of Vipont, which he had neither the means of observing or ascertaining; for he had simply, by the assistance of a ladder, dropped the letter into his apartment, and hurried away.

“The measure of my vengeance against this man is now almost full!” said he; “woe be to him who would lessen it! To have destroyed her while this Vipont believed in her innocence would have left that vengeance but half sated. Now have I fairly robbed her of her honour and her very soul—at least, in the eyes of this gilded moth, who loves her, as I know, even to adoration; but not more than I do—oh, no!—not more than I, who am her destroyer, and on whose hands her blood will lie. Oh, Jane! . . .”

His head fell forward on his breast.

“But harkye, Birrell,” said he, suddenly recovering; “to-day the cardinal goes to Falkland, to seek her pardon from the king; and this pardon (if granted) young

Leslie of Balquhan is to convey straight to Sir James Riddel, at our castle here. Now mark me, Nichol Birrel, and mark me well, this pardon must be brought to *me*, and to me alone. 'Tis an insult of this meddling cardinal to send it to Cranstoun-Riddel, the castellan, while I am lord advocate. This very day, after morning mass, his eminence and this holiday lieutenant of the guards, set out for Falkland. Do thou, with Trotter and fifteen, or as many good horsemen as you can muster, follow, and watch well for Leslie's return. Be more wary than you were in Douglasdale, or what avail your promises of service? Between this and Falkland there is many a mile of lonely muirland, where blows may be struck, or bones broken, and where a slain man may sleep undiscovered till the judgment-day—see to it! This Leslie is in your hands, as Vipont was before. A hundred French crowns if thou bringest me the pardon. Stay!—there is the Laird of Clatto, who hath a plea before the Lords; tell him, that if he wishes well to his case, *a certain horseman* must not pass the Lomond-hill; there are the Lindsays of Kirkforthar and Bandon, who are the sworn foemen of the House of Balquhan. I know thy skill and cunning—ride and rouse them! Ride and raise all the Howe of Fife on the king's messenger; and here is my thumb on't, Nichol Birrel, my three best crofts at Redhall shall be thine of a free gift, heritably and irredeemably, to thee and thine heirs for ever."

In one hour from that time this indefatigable ruffian had Tam Trotter and fifteen other horsemen completely armed, with helmets and cuirasses, gorgets, and gloves of steel, swords, lances, and petronels, awaiting his orders (and the cardinal's departure) in the stable-yard of Redhall's lodging in the Canongate.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CROSS AND GILLSTOUP.

"But the curtain of twilight o'ershadows the shore,
And deepens the tint on the blue Lammermuir;
The tints on Corstorphine have paled in their fire,
But sunset still lingers with gold on its spire;
The Roseberry forests are hooded in grey,
And night, like his heir, treads impatient on day—
And now, gentle stranger, if such be thy mood,
Go welcome the moonlight in sweet Holyrood."

ON the night, with which our last chapters have been chiefly occupied, at the identical time when Father St. Bernard was concerting with the cardinal, *anent* procuring a pardon for Lady Jane, two other kind friends were elsewhere concerting the escape of her lover—but planning it like soldiers, by escalade and at point of the sword.

In the course of the present history we have, more than once, referred to a certain flourishing tavern, named *The Cross and Gillstoup*, which, in those days, displayed its sign-board to the public eye on the south side of the then somewhat suburban street, the Canongate.

Though the host of this establishment was vitally interested in the freedom of the master of king James's ordnance, in so far that he owed him the sum of thirty

crowns for wine, it was not deemed advisable to take him into the conspiracy. In a little chamber of this tavern, vaulted, like all the first stories in old Edinburgh, having a sanded floor, a plain wooden table, and fir chairs of capacious dimensions, a little figure of the Madonna in a corner, beneath which was a begging-box, belonging to the Franciscans, inscribed, "Help ye puir, as ye wald God dit you," sat Sir John Forrester, captain of the king's arquebusiers, and Leslie of Balquhan, his lieutenant; though it was past the hour of nine, when, by the laws of James I., no man was to be found in a tavern after that hour rang from the burgh bell, under a penalty of warding in the Tolbooth, or paying "the king's chamberlane fyftie schillings."

Being gentlemen, and moreover officers of the guard, these two cavaliers considered themselves above such vulgar rules, and were quietly sitting down to supper. Their bonnets and mantles, their unbuckled swords and daggers, lay on a side bench; each had a knife and platter of delft ware, with a silver-rimmed drinking-horn, before him; and between them stood a savoury powt pie, with a great pewter jug of wine, the said pewter jug being polished to the brightness of a mirror; and Leslie used it as such, to point up his moustachioes; for the hostess of *The Cross and Gillstoup* prided herself particularly on the brightness of her pots and kettles—and then, be it remembered, pewter was a luxury.

Seated at another table in the background, but helped liberally from the before mentioned powt pie and the gallant pewter jug, old Lintstock, the ex-cannonier, with his steel cap and Jedwood axe laid beside him, his white hair glistening in the light of three long candles, and his eye looking very fierce and red, was eating his supper with a stern and disconsolate,

but nevertheless very determined aspect; for he had thoroughly resolved on doing something desperate, though he had not exactly made up his mind as to what that desperate thing should be. Ever since his master's arrest the forlorn old soldier had been protected by Sir John Forrester, who remarked, as they proceeded to supper—

"A whole day has passed, and yet, Leslie, we have resolved on nothing; and now our resolutions must needs be sharp and sure, for high and overstrained in their newfangled notions of civil authority, the abbot Mylne and Redhall will come swoop down like a pair of ravenous hawks on poor Vipont, for his escapade on that devilish day of Lady Jane's trial."

"I am aware of that."

"Then why did you not come sooner?"

"Sooner? Why, Sir John, I have never had time to cross myself to-day."

"Busy—thou?"

"Oh, I had a score of matters to attend to. First, I had to buy me a pot of rouge at the Tron for Madame de Montreuil, who complains that her complexion hath gone since the late queen's death; then I had to escort the Countess of Glencairn and little Mademoiselle de Brissac, who must needs go on a pilgrimage to the chapel of St. James; then I had to get a pint of wine at Leith to refresh me; then I had to write a song for Marion Logan, and to ride to John of the Silvermills, anent some matters for bonny Alison Hume."

"I knew not that she was ailing."

"Nay, 'twas only to get some almond paste for her dainty hands, and oil of roses for her hair."

"Plague on thee and them! Canst think of such

cursed trifles when our best friends are in such deadly peril?"

"Now really, Corstorphine," said Leslie, as he spread the white linen serviette over his red satin trunk breeches; "is the whole world to stand still because Roland Vipont is laid by the heels? Or dost thou think that the king will bring to death, or even to trial, so brave a fellow as our captain of his ordnance?"

"The devil! thou talkest as if brave fellows were scarce in Scotland. But the Lady Seton, her chances of life——"

"Are small indeed; but let us only have our Vipont free of Cranstoun-Riddel, on horseback beside us, with his helmet on, and his sword drawn, and we shall carry the lady off in face of all Edinburgh! What care we for the burgher guard, or the lances of the provost!"

"The king——"

"Will love a deed so bold, and so much after his own heart."

"If we were to fail?"

"'Tis but dying like bold fellows in our corslets."

"Thy hand, my brave Leslie, for thou art an honour to thy name," replied Sir John Forrester, with admiration.

"Poor Marion Logan has quite spoiled her fine eyes by crying for three days and nights consecutively about her friend."

Here something between a sob and a growl proceeded from the corner, where Lintstock was gulping down his supper and his sorrows together.

"Why, Lintstock, my old Cyclop," said Leslie, "thou art looking grave as a German lanzknecht. Tuts! cheer up; thy master will soon be out of David's

Tower; and then, let Sir Adam of Redhall look to himself."

"Aye, Balquhan, but let him look well to himself before that cometh to pass!"

"How, old Tartar! wouldst thou give the king's advocate a sliver with thine axe?"

"I will hew him to the brisket for having dared to look at my master's lemane! By St. John! if any man dare look aboon his rosettes, when passing my master's next lady-love at kirk, or market——"

"Oho!" said Sir John Forrester, hastily; "thou seemest better acquainted with this matter than most of us. But be wary, carle, thy head may run under a noose. Some more pie?"

"If it please ye, sir."

"If it pleases thee rather. Eat well, my old cormorant; for it hath been a fast with thee since thy master's arrest. Now, Leslie, to return to what we were talking of. I know of no other means of procuring admittance to Vipont's prison but in disguise. If Father St. Bernard would lend me his cassock——"

"Thou art too tall by eight inches. I know my Lady Cranstoun-Riddel's little tire-woman," said Leslie, winking, and clanking his gold spurs.

"I' faith! a nice little dame, with black eyes and pretty teeth."

"But a saucy darnstocking, spoiled at court by the pages and archers."

"Through her something might be achieved though."

"Is she particular?"

"Not at all! If she would only conceal me in her room for one night——"

"Once there, rogue, thou wouldst forget all about

poor Vipont, thy mission, and the coil of stout rope wherewith thou proposest to line thy trunk breeches."

Here the noise of a window being raised behind him made Leslie turn his head.

"What is that? Mother of God! what is *that*?" he exclaimed, in alarm, with his sword half drawn, on seeing a black visage, with shining eyeballs, a row of sharp white teeth, and two black paws, appear between the lifted sash and the window-sill.

Forrester started, and Lintstock snatched up his axe.

The head grinned and bowed, and waved its black paws with a grotesque air of respect and deprecation.

"By my soul! 'tis Lady Ashkirk's ill-omened page!" said the captain, bursting into a fit of laughter.

"How—the evil spirit, anent which we have heard so much of late?"

"Nay, no evil spirit, but a poor denizen of those countries which lie beneath the sun. Sir Robert Barton, the admiral, swears they are half men and half marmosets; but Father St. Bernard told me they were the descendants of Cain. I am not afraid of *it*—nay, not I," said the tall knight of Corstorphine, as he drew on his military gloves, and—but not without some repugnance—seized the hands of Sabrino, and drew him into the room.

The poor black boy, whose aspect was now deplorable, fell on his knees, and poured forth his thanks in frightful mutterings, that seemed to come from the bottom of his throat, and lolled out the fragment of his tongue in a way that produced a striking effect on old Lintstock, and, to say the least of it, was very unearthly. The old cannonier clenched his axe in one hand, his wine-pot in the other, and recoiled as from a snake.

"Lintstock," said Forrester, "thou hast seen this creature before ; dost understand its gibberish ?"

"It is thanking you, as I think, sir ; but it looks gey wolfishlike at the last of the powt pie."

"Right, Lintstock," said Leslie, placing the dish before Sabrino. The famished negro gave him a glance of intense thankfulness, and straightway plunged his black fingers into the pie, of which he ate voraciously.

After the night of the earl's adventure on the island, of the countess's baffled flight, the duel with Sir James Hamilton, and of Ashkirk's disappearance with Sybil in the boat, Sabrino, who had escaped all the arquebus shots by ducking in the water, and clinging to the weed-covered rocks, next day found himself under dangerous circumstances, for the cavern which had formed his hiding-place being now discovered and searched, he had no longer any place of concealment ; thus hunger and the danger of death made him resolve to put in practice a plan he had frequently conceived, but had not yet dared to execute.

At certain periods, a large boat came regularly from Leith in the morning with provisions for the garrison, and generally returned in the evening. An opportunity soon occurred, and Sabrino, diving under the counter of this barge at the very moment it left the creek of the Inch, lashed himself (with a fragment of rope) to the iron pintles which fastened the rudder to the sternpost. In the summer atmosphere of a warm July, the water of the majestic Forth was calm and warm, and the motion was pleasant and easy as the oarsmen shot their lightened boat across its broad and glassy surface, on which the setting sun was shining. Though half choked at times by the salt spray that flew from the oars,

beneath the counter, where he hung, Sabrino, with unflinching resolution, endured the danger of being towed for three miles, and was glad to find that the dusk had fairly set in before the boat was moored to the old wooden pier which then terminated the ancient harbour under the rampart of the round tower.

Poor Sabrino knew that all the white men feared and hated him; but he knew not that he was regarded as little less than the devil himself—for such he had been considered and declared to be by the wise and learned of the college of justice. Avoiding every person, he had the sense to thread his way into the city by some secret passage, and went straight to the mansion of the Ashkirk family. It was silent and deserted, for the spiders were already spinning their cobwebs on the lock of its iron gate. Failing also to find Sir Roland Vipont, and fearing to encounter others, the unhappy mute had instinctively sought the tavern, where in palmier and more privileged days he had so frequently brought him messages from his mistress.

Sabrino knew well the approaches to the place, and entering the Horse Wynd, cleared at a bound the wall of the kail-yard, and reaching the window of the old familiar room, obtained egress,—not from Roland Vipont, as he had expected, but by the assistance of Sir John Forrester, as we have just related.

“Drink,” said that frank and stately soldier, handing to the wet, weary, and famished being a cup of wine, when he had eaten to his satisfaction; “but now, what in the fiend’s name shall we do with thee? I would not for all my mains and mills at Corstorphine thou wert found by Redhall living under my protection; and yet ’twere a foul shame to drive thee forth, the

more so as all men's hands and voices are against thee."

Sabrino understood Sir John, and hung his head sorrowfully.

"Nay, poor devil!" he added, kindly, "thou shalt byde with me, and I bite my glove at all who dare say nay."

"Could we not paint him, or dye him, or scrub him well with hot water, so that in colour, at least, he might be like other men?"

"We shall see," replied the captain of the arquebuses; "I will talk with my old confessor about it—he knows everything. But it hath such capacious eyes, and such a nose!"

"By Jove! its face is like a Highland buckler!" added the other, and they paused to regard Sabrino with all the curiosity a new species of animal would have excited.

"Sir John Forrester," said Lintstock, "I ken weel that this creature can clamber like a squirrel; and gif we show him the tower wherein my puir maister girns and granes for his luv and his liberty, I warrant he'll sune rax to the window. Put a saw between his teeth, a coil o' stout rope on his back, and I warrant me, we shall hae Sir Roland Vipont beside us in three hours after."

"Thou art right, Lintstock," said Leslie, while Sabrino, on hearing himself referred to, looked fixedly at the one-eyed gunner; this "creature's black hide hath brought thy brave master and his fair mistress into sore trouble, and I know of none who ought to exert his energies more than he in their service. It is agreed; we shall show him the rock, the tower, the window, and that by daybreak to-morrow."

Sabrino understood them perfectly, while he gazed at them with the painful and speechless anxiety which his face depicted at times so powerfully; and, anxious to express his gratitude, his eyes shone, while he grinned and nodded, and saying—

“Ees—ess—ess!” laid his hands repeatedly on his breast, and placed the hand of Sir John Forrester on his woolly head, in token that he was their liege and true man.

At that moment a loud knock was heard at the door.

“Under the table, Sabrino—hide, hide,” said Leslie; “I would not for my helmet full of gold pieces, thou wert seen with us—quick!”

Sabrino dived below the table, and again the knock was heard.

“Who is there without?—come in,” said Sir John.

Carrying in his hand his bonnet, which was adorned by a long white feather, a graceful young man, attired in the most gorgeous and extreme of the fashion of that age, a doublet of peach-coloured velvet, sown with seed pearls, and stiff with silver lace, a Genoese mantle of blue velvet, and trunks and hose of the palest yellow satin, appeared.

“My Lord David Lindesay!” said the two officers of the guard, as they started from their seats.

“A message from the cardinal,” said the young lord, who was soon to become the primate’s son-in-law. “His eminence sets out to-morrow for Falkland Palace to visit the king, and begs the favour of some twenty arquebusiers, under your guidance, Laird of Balquhan, as the roads are neither safe nor sure at this time.”

Leslie looked at his captain.

“Half the guard are at Falkland already, under the

other lieutenant, the Laird of Bute," replied Forrester; "but my friend Balquhan will be at the disposal of his eminence to-morrow with twenty arquebusiers. At what time do you mount and ride?"

"After morning prayer," said the young lord; "you know how unsafe the country is around Falkland—for his eminence, at least."

"True; the Kirkaldies of Grange, the Melvilles of Raith, and the Seatons of Clatto, are no friends of his."

After a few more words of course, and tasting their wine, the heir of the princely line of Crawford bowed and retired.

"A hundred devils!" said Leslie, as he buckled on his sword. "This duty will prevent me assisting in the escape of our poor Vipont."

"It matters not, my true Leslie, for I alone will see to that. But how, a-God's name, am I to get our sable friend conveyed to my quarters in the palace? If our fat host of the *Cross and Gillstoup* should see him, all will be over with him."

After some consideration to preclude his being seen, and avoid the dangerous surmises consequent thereto, it was arranged that Sabrino should retire in the same manner as he had entered—by the window, which he immediately did.

Thereafter, having met the captain and lieutenant of the guard at the low wall which then bordered the west side of the Horse Wynd at the foot of the Canongate, Leslie muffled him up to the eyes in his velvet mantle, and he was taken past the guards, pages, &c., into the inmost court of the palace, where Forrester concealed him in an apartment, the key of which he hung at his waist belt.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CASTAWAYS.

"'Tis very certain the desire of life
Prolongs it : this is obvious to physicians,
When patients, neither plagued with friends nor wife,
Survive through very desperate conditions,
Because they still can hope, nor shines the knife,
Near shears of Atropus before their visions :
Despair of all recovery spoils longevity,
And makes men's miseries of alarming brevity.

BYRON.

WE have related how the Earl of Ashkirk, as the only means of avoiding death or recapture, had spread the lug-sail of his boat to the western breeze, and was borne down the Firth of Forth.

The gale was freshening, and it blew the white foam from the waves, as they rose and fell, and rose again in rapid succession, as if to meet the sharp prow of the boat, which shot through them like an arrow through a wreath of smoke. The boat of the Inch was left behind ; for unwilling to run the risk of being carried out to sea, its crew gave up the pursuit in despair. The earl laughed in triumph, and to his breast folded Sybil, who was trembling with terror at the world of water that whirled around them.

Dim and distant, the hills of Fife and Lothian seemed

soon to be afar off; the isle the fugitives had left seemed also sinking fast, and little trace of the shore remained, after the moon sank behind the peaks of Stirlingshire. The earl now attempted to turn shoreward; but in a moment found the impossibility of making the least headway against the strong and increasing wind, the ebbing tide and the fierce current of the mighty Firth, which had there expanded to an ocean.

"The shore—the shore now. Oh, good, my dear earl, turn towards the shore!" implored Sybil, in great terror, as she clung to her companion.

"It is impossible! Against such a wind as this, I should merely have our boat upset, and this, dearest Sybil, would not be very pleasant."

"Mercy! we shall be swept out into the homeless ocean!" she continued, with increasing fear as the boat rose suddenly up, or surged as swiftly down into a deep dark and watery hollow, while the heaving of the waves increased every moment.

"Nay, now, Sybil, afraid!—thou a Douglas of Kilspindie? I will never believe it. Let us bear right on towards the bonny Bay of Aberlady, which will soon receive us, and, lo! we shall find ourselves just under your father's castle of Kilspindie."

"Better are we here," replied Sybil, with a kindling eye: "know you not, that like Tantallon, it is garrisoned by a party of Hamiltons?"

"Now, God's malison be on this tribe, for they have come out of their native Clydesdale to spread even as locusts over all the Lowlands."

"But there is many a crofter at Kilspindie, and many a stout fisherman at Aberlady, who will shelter us for the love they bear our grandsire Sir Archibald

Douglas, and for the sake of the old race. They are all leal men and true to the Douglas name."

"I have sufficiently perforated one Hamilton to-night, and have no wish to come to handyblows with another, especially while having thee, my little lady, to protect."

"And dost thou think, cousin Archibald, that I can neither fire a petronel, or unwind a pistolette, as my aunt, your mother, doth?"

"Nay, Sybil, thou wouldst surely shut fast those black eyes of thine, when the wheel whirled and the sulphuret sprung; for thou hast seen less of blood and blows, of men unhorsed and armour riven, than the countess, my mother; for thou never sawest the Douglas banner in its glory, in the days of James IV., as she tells us many a time and oft. Why, bethink thee, Sybil, two hundred gentlemen, Douglasses, all dubbed knights of name, and wearing spurs of gold, were found lying slain on Flodden field—that fatal field where bold king James, with ten thousand of the Scottish noblesse, fought till going down of the sun, against six-and-twenty thousand Englishmen."

The earl spoke of these and other things to draw Sybil's attention from their present danger; but the wind was still increasing, and he had thrice lessened the sail since leaving Inchkeith; the moon was gone, the waves were becoming gloomy, and though Sybil was too much accustomed to boating to be sick, she trembled at the increasing tumult of the Firth, and shuddered in the cold night wind that blew over it, for the plaid in which the earl enveloped her failed as a protection against the chill ocean atmosphere. This plaid—a plain border maud of black and white cheque, he had long worn as the best of disguises, for it was a warm and ample, though a coarse and humble garment.

For a full hour the boat beat fruitlessly against the wind, which now blew off the land, and again the earl was forced to run her before it, to avoid being swamped by the fierce and foam-headed waves, that careered ahead and astern of her; and now the dark, shadowy outline of Gulane Hill came out of the dusky vapour that rested on the face of the water to the east. Aware that the little sandy Bay of Aberlady lay below it, he trimmed the lessened sail and grasped the tiller, in the hope of beaching the boat upon its level shore; but, lo! the envious wind veered suddenly a few points more to the south, and blew directly off the coast, and with such sudden fury, that the boat was nearly overset.

Instantly securing the tiller by a rope, the earl rushed to the lug-sail to take in its last reef, and fearing to be dashed on the rocks that fringe the coast, he was now compelled to pass the wished for haven, and lie still further off, with his prow turned towards the pathless waste of the German Sea. Then, but only when he thought of Sybil and what she was suffering from cold and terror, did his brave heart sink with apprehension. Muffled completely in the plaid, she endeavoured to shut out the sight of the black tumbling waves and their foam-flecked summits, the sound of the moaning wind and the creaking of the labouring boat, but every instant the noise increased, and every shower of spray that flew over her was heavier than the last. She prayed with fervour; and the impetuous earl, who was rather inclined to swear, both at the sea and wind, more than once, amid the wild discord of the waves, heard her small soft voice raised in prayer to God, and to St. Bryde of Douglas, the patron of her race, the virgin of Kil-dara.

The castle of Kilspindie, with its great square tower and sandy shore, the beautiful Bay of Aberlady, with its sheltered village, were now astern; and nothing was seen but the bluff headland of Gulane-ness, with the white foam rising like smoke against its tremendous front of rocks.

Wan gleams of uncertain light shot over the desolate estuary; the whole prospect was dreary and alarming. Strong, active, and determined, Lord Ashkirk might have reached the shore by swimming, but Sybil——

He struck his sail almost in despair, and now bent all his unwearying energy to bale out his little craft; for she was filling fast, and he fully expected to be swamped by every mountain-like wave, that with its monstrous head curling aloft, and snowy with foam—a foam rendered yet more terrible by the gloom and obscurity around it—rolled on towards the rocks of Gulane-ness, drenching the labouring skiff in its passage, and threatening to engulf it in an abyss for ever.

He was without fear for himself; but when he beheld Sybil crouching down beside him, his heart filled with anxiety and dread, with suspense and remorse; and he reflected that were the catastrophe, which he dreaded and expected every moment, to happen—he thrust away the thought as too horrible to contemplate, and baled on with renewed energy, pausing only to kiss the upturned brow of Sybil, or press her trembling hands. They were becoming very cold.

A thousand thoughts of home and friends, of love and life, came vividly on her mind; and Sybil reflected that she was happy even on yonder closely guarded island, when she contrasted the security and

hope it afforded with the danger and hopelessness of their present predicament.

Day began to dawn in the east, and with joy poor Sybil hailed it; for though helpless and feeble, she had seen and admired the unwearying energy of her lover, in keeping the boat *alive* in such a frightful sea. His exertions were almost superhuman, for *her* existence depended upon them.

They were now past that tremendous promontory.

Uninfluenced by its bold abutment, the waves were more smooth; and again the earl spread his sail, and made another vain attempt to gain the southern shore.

A sickly yellow glow spread over the east, as the sun arose from the ocean enveloped in watery clouds; the wind had not yet spent its fury; the whole aspect of the sky and water was dark and dreary. The summit of the land was veiled in mist; its shore was fringed with rocks, on which the surf was beating; and from these rocks the wind blew fierce and strong. No vessel was in sight; and not a living thing was visible but the startled seamews and kitty-wakes, the gannets and cormorants, that were whirled past them, screaming on the wind, which often dashed them into the bosom of the upheaved water.

"Now Heaven be thy protection, my Sybil!" exclaimed the earl, as he sank exhausted beside her, "for I can do no more."

Worn out by toil, and exhausted also by loss of blood from a flesh wound received from the sword of Barncleugh, and still more overcome by his frantic and unaided exertions during so many hours to trim the boat and keep her floating, he now found himself conquered, and completely overcome. He was pale as death, his hands

trembled, his eyes were bloodshot, and the blood that trickled from his nostrils declared painfully how far he had overtaken his strength.

"God protect thee, Sybil!" he repeated, as he pressed his trembling lips to her brow; "God protect thee, for all my poor strength has failed me now."

He burst into tears, from excess of weakness; but this was the emotion of a moment only; he smiled sadly, and encircling Sybil with his arms endeavoured to warm her.

Again he gathered courage, and setting a few feet of sail, grasped the tiller, and strove fruitlessly to keep the boat to the wind; but filling fast with every wave, she laboured heavily; and now the tumult of the water increased; for right ahead rose Ibris, Fidra, the Lamb, and Craigleith, four little rugged isles that lie at the very mouth of the Firth. On Fidra stood a little chapel, and amid its ruins (which are yet visible) a myriad of gulls and gannets build their nests, and thick as gnats in the sunshine the sea birds were flying around its rocks on the stormy wind.

These four isles are but enormous masses of basalt; and against them the Firth and ocean poured their adverse tides in ridges of foam; then seeing the utter futility of attempting, in such a gale, to weather them, the earl let slip his sail, and with a crack like the report of a musket, the braces flew through the blocks, and the nut-brown canvas vanished into the air.

He now resigned the boat to its fate, and expected every moment to see it dashed upon the isle of Ibris, or swept through the little channel that lay between it and the shore, and through which a strong current was running.

By a miracle they passed these isles, and were swept to the seaward.

"A ship! a ship! dear Archibald—look, my lord—a ship!" exclaimed Sybil, as, with an expression of the most extravagant joy, she threw her arm towards it—"a rescue from the jaws of death!"

Eagerly the earl raised his drooping head; and lo! a stately merchant ship, with her large foresail set, but her topsails and square spritsail close reefed, was standing northward across the Firth from the harbour of North Berwick. Ashkirk waved his grey plaid, and in a few minutes, by the altered course of the vessel, it was evident they had been observed by the mariners, who were seen crowding the high forecastle, the still higher poop, and low waist, which was profusely covered with religious emblems, and she had a large blue Scottish cross painted in the centre of each of her sails.

"If it should be a ship of the king—one of Barton's fleet!" muttered the earl; who, before her appearance, had been entertaining visions of founding a Chapel to St. Bryde of Douglas, on the bleak rocks of Fidra, if they escaped from their present perils.

On came the ship, looming largely, with the water plashing under her gilded bows, which rose and fell on the heaving water.

Manned by eight stout mariners, a boat shot off towards the castaways, and in a short time the half-lifeless Sybil and the earl scarcely less exhausted were conveyed on board the strange ship, which proved to be the *Saint Adrian*, a large vessel belonging to the monks of the May, who in those days possessed many trading barks, and trafficked largely with the Hanse Towns, Flanders, and the Baltic. Once safely on board, the necessity of

caution prevailed over the earl's piety, and concealing the rank of Sybil and himself under feigned names, he merely stated that they had been accidentally blown off the coast.

A run of a few hours brought the ship to the Isle of May, whose cliffs of dark green rock, with the sea-fowl floating in clouds above them, rise precipitously on the east, and descend to foam-beaten reefs on the west.

On this verdant island stood a chapel dedicated to St. Adrian, who had been murdered there in his hermitage, by the pagan Danes, in the year 870; near it stood a priory belonging to St. Mary of Pittenween, the monks of which received the rescued fugitives with every hospitality; and there necessity compelled them to reside for several weeks; for in that remote place there was seldom any intercourse with the main land.

Of all that was passing in the capital Sybil and her lover were happily ignorant.

Communication between places was slow in those days, and continued to be so for many a generation after. Even a hundred and fifty years later, the abdication of James VII. from the British throne, was not known in some parts of Scotland until four months after the usurper had installed himself in his Palace of St. James.

CHAPTER XXII.

FALKLAND.

"Where Ceres gilds the fertile plain,
And richly waves the yellow grain;
And Lomond hill wi' misty showers
Aft weets auld Falkland's royal towers."

RICHARD GALL.

AT the foot of the beautiful Lomond hills, lie the town and palace of Falkland—a palace now, alas! like Scotland's ancient royalty, among the things that were.

Many old trees in the neighbourhood, the remnant of the ancient royal forest of Falkland, still impart to the fragment of the palace an air both melancholy and venerable; for it is but a fragment that survives, and makes one think with sorrow and anger of that remorseless system of absorption which is laying Scotland bare, and, year by year, sweeps southward some portion of her money and vitality. A day is coming, perhaps, when Holyrood, the last and least beautiful of our Scottish palaces, may be abandoned like the rest, if not to some ignoble purpose, at least to ruin and decay. The fine old pile of Falkland was successively engrafted on the ancient tower of the Thaness of Fife, by the third, fourth, and fifth James's, until it formed a quadrangle, one side of which alone survives the decay

consequent to its desertion, and the neglect with which every feature of Scotland's ancient state is treated by the partial and (so far as *she* is concerned) penurious government to which she yearly hands over the six millions of her revenue.

Lying under the northern brow of a mountain, and so situated as to be concealed from the sun during a considerable portion of the winter, Falkland is a quaint-looking place, removed from any great thoroughfare, and still inhabited by a primitive race of weavers, who have, generation after generation, followed the same trade as their fathers. Their dwellings are thatched; each cottar has his kailyard; and, with much of our old Scottish simplicity and contentment, they jog through life as their "forbears" did before them; and it is no uncommon thing to hear the older burghers quoting the learned sayings, and relating the quaint doings of his Majesty James VI., as if he still kept court amongst them.

Lying at the foot of the steep eastern Lomond, with its vanes and carved pinnacles overtopping the foliage of its old green copsewood, the ruined palace of Falkland, when seen from a little distance, resembles an ancient Scoto-French chateau, and the white smoke of its burgh-town (now diminished to a village), as it curls from the green foliage that fringes the glen, makes rustic and beautiful this solitary place, which was the scene of many a sorrow and many a joy to the illustrious line of our ancient kings.

The blending of the solid Palladian with the lightness of Gothic architecture, imparts to the fragment of the palace now remaining a singularly pleasing effect. On each floor of the most ancient portion there are six windows, divided by stone mullions, beautifully moulded, and between them are buttresses formed by foliaged

columns and Tuscan entablatures, which support inverted trusses covered with the most elaborate carving. Designed by the same unfortunate architect who planned the Tower of James V. at Holyrood, the western front is in the castellated style, and exhibits two finely proportioned round towers, between which is the lofty archway forming the entrance to what was once the grand quadrangle. In former times, this arch was closed at night by strong gates, and was defended by loopholes in the towers which flank it. Medallions, in exquisite relief, the frequent initials, crests, and arms of James V. and Mary of Guise and Lorraine, the gallant thistle with its imperial crown, deep panels with many a coat armorial, grotesque waterspouts and gothic pinnacles, with many an elaborate niche and beautiful statue, all combine to show that Falkland, if not the largest, was one of the most beautiful of Scotland's ancient palaces.

The gay cardinal had tarried on his way from Edinburgh, having made a little detour round the Moss of Kirkforthar to visit a certain fair dame, who is still known in Fifeshire tradition as the Lady Vane; thus it was the forenoon of the 24th July, before he approached Falkland; and on the next night Jane Seton was—to die.

Matters of state, rather than her safety, had drawn the cardinal to Falkland. An ambassador was coming from England, and against that ambassador he had resolved to bias the mind of James V.

Despite his ecclesiastical severity, and despite all that has been urged against the character of this determined prelate—our Scottish Wolsey—we must assert fearlessly, that he was as true a Scotsman as ever breathed: and *that* should go far to redeem his errors

in the present day, when Scottish spirit and Scottish patriotism are somewhat scarce commodities. Beaton was the sternest, the most active and distinguished ecclesiastic of his time. The Protestant faith recoiled before him, and its defender "by the grace of God," Henry VIII. of England, laid fruitlessly many plots for his death by assassination ; but Beaton's master mind circumvented them all. He was too sagacious, and perhaps too worldly, to be superstitious, even at that time ; and whatever may have been his errors and his failings (and these, God wot, were not few), his steady maintenance of our Scottish honour and independence, should ensure him some little credit, even in the present age. It cannot be denied that he viewed the tenets of the Calvinists with contempt, for he considered them as the natural enemies of Scotland, of her church, and of himself ; hence his indomitable attachment to that church which he considered the only true path to heaven, and whose tenets he upheld by death and fire, and sealed by his own blood,

Cardinal Beaton had a grave, firm, warm, and confident mode of expression, which was never used without producing a due effect on the frank and manly James V., who admired his lofty spirit, his keen perception in the field and cabinet, the vastness and profundity of his political projects ; his staunch maintenance of the national dignity against English aggression, his avowed hostility to Henry VIII., which, with his bold and reflective character, together with his merciless persecution of all schismatics, combined to make him the first man in Scotland, and the most formidable prince of the church in Europe.

The summit of the steep and lofty Easter Lomond,

which rises abruptly up from Falkland, was veiled in mist, but below the sunbeams glanced along its sides of dark brown heath, as the cardinal's train rode through the stately park of the palace. It was a glorious summer day; that morning a shower had fallen, and everything looked fresh and beautiful; the Rose-loch, with its flowery islets, where the snowy swan and dusky ouzel built their nests among the water-lilies, was glittering with light; and the old woods of Falkland and Drumdreel rustled their heavy foliage in the gentle wind.

James V. sat in the recess of a mullioned window, and gazed listlessly at the summer landscape, which included the whole strath of Eden, the fertile and magnificent Howe of Fife, from Cupar to Strathmiglo, spread before him, bright with verdure and glittering with sunlight; but James was caressing a little dog that had belonged to his Magdalene. A ribbon encircled its neck; and, though worn and faded, he would not permit it to be removed, "for," as he said, "her dear pretty hands had tied it there." Again and again James looked sadly at the ribbon, and thus he saw neither the vast landscape nor the cardinal's glittering train, which (headed by Leslie of Balquhan) swept round the palace on the soft sward, and entered the quadrangle.

James was in deep mourning for the queen. His doublet, trunk breeches, hose, and rosettes were of black satin, lightly laced. His mantle was of black velvet, with a cross of white silk sown thereon. All the ornaments of the apartment had been removed, save a large crucifix, which stood on the ebony table, and a portrait of his grandfather James III., whose golden locks made

him the original of "the yellow-haired laddie," a song and air composed for him by his favourite musician Rodgers. The walls were covered with rich French tapestry, exhibiting landscapes embroidered with green and gold. The furniture was all of the darkest walnut wood, elaborately carved in the fashion of James III., and inlaid with mosaics from Florence—the thistle and the fleur-de-lis studded with their golden leaves the oak beams and deep panels of the ceiling.

Moulded, and cusped with stone, the gothic windows were filled with lozenged panes in leaden frames, stained with arms and devices; and the curtains which shaded them were of Venetian brocade.

Absorbed in his grief, the king for some time past had abandoned all his favourite amusements—horses, hounds, hawks, music, and masquerading, had all been forgotten; for the livelong day he sat alone and brooded over the memory of Magdalene of France. This lethargy communicated itself to the court. The dogs lay sleeping in the yard; the hooded hawks winked and nodded on their perches; the royal standard hung still and unwoven on the gateway; the swans seemed to sleep on the loch; and the arquebusier at the archway leaned on the boll of his weapon, and dozed, while the pages, who had been playing with quoits in the park, slept on the sunny benches before the gate.

The approaching train electrified the inhabitants of the palace.

"The cardinal himself, or may the devil take me!" cried little Lord Claud Hamilton, the king's favourite page, a saucy boy of sixteen, with a long feather in his cap, and a precocious moustache on his upper lip, as he sprang off the bench, and all the pages rushed into the palace to announce the intelligence.

The dogs barked, and the hawks screamed and flapped their wings.

The arquebusier shouldered his arquebuse, and turned out the guard; the arms rattled on the pavement; the drum beat; and the whole palace of Falkland was aroused like that of the sleeping beauty in the wood.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE KING AND THE CARDINAL.

“Ne’er should be a vassal banished,
Without time to plead his cause;
Ne’er should king his people’s rights
Trample on, or break the laws;
Ne’er should he his liegemen punish,
More than to their crimes is due;
Lest they rise into rebellion—
That day sorely would he rue.”

RODRIGO OF BIVAR.

“His eminence the cardinal, may it please your majesty,” said the little Lord Claud, announcing the visitor. Setting down the lap-dog, king James started from his seat, and without any further preamble, the tall and stately figure of Beaton approached him. James knelt for a moment to receive his blessing, and then pressed his hand in silence.

The poor king looked paler, thinner, and sadder than when the cardinal had seen him last in Holyrood, beside that grave over which a nation mourned; but this did not prevent the perfect courtier from saying—

“I rejoice to see your majesty looking so well.”

“It is not merely to flatter, you have disturbed my sad retirement,” said James, with one of his old smiles;

"but welcome heartily, Lord Cardinal; I have longed to converse with you, anent many things."

The little dog whined, and the king took it again in his hands to caress it, while the page withdrew, and the cardinal seated himself. "Here are splendour and magnificence," thought he, "saloons full of guards, and chambers full of courtiers, pages, lacqueys, wealth and rank—but where is happiness?"

"My lord," said James, "I have many questions to ask you concerning my poor Vipont, the trial of the Lady Seton, and her mad brother's invasion of Inchkeith single-handed. Faith! he is quite a devil of a fellow! But first tell me what rumour is this, of cannonading in the river Forth, which reached me this morning?"

"Oh, it was merely Monseigneur Claude d'Annebault, Admiral of France, who has brought the new ambassador, escorted by eight frigates, which have anchored off the Beacon rock at Leith, where they saluted the Scottish flag, and the ships of Sir Robert Barton replied by their culverins."

"France," said James, sadly; "and this ambassador?"

"Will pay his respects to your majesty to-morrow."

"By my soul, I thought it was the Lord Howard with the fleet of my uncle Henry; and that he had come to blows with stout Sir Robert."

"A new ambassador from England is also coming hither."

"Ah!—and concerning what?"

"A league with Henry. Need I implore your majesty," said the cardinal, in the most impressive tones of his persuasive voice, "need I implore you to beware!"

He comes to crave an interview, that Henry may instil into your heart his own hatred of France and heresy to God."

"Hatred to the France of my Magdalene—the France of Scotland's old alliance! Nay, my Lord Cardinal, I need no warnings. There is a grasping and aggressive spirit in England, of which Scotland should beware; but can my heretic uncle imagine that he will induce me to bring about here the same change of religion that he, by a single word, has wrought in England?"

"He cannot; but he thinks that England will never be thoroughly Protestant, or at least opposed to Rome, while Scotland remains Catholic and true; thus his whole soul is bent on breaking that continental alliance which aggravates, as he thinks, our old and just hostility to his people."

"Is not the alliance broken? My poor little Magdalene!"

"Thou hast most unwisely and unjustly permitted Sir David Lindesay of the Mount, George Buchanan and others to satirize the bishops and orders of clergy; yet, in the name of the latter, I have this day approached your majesty, to offer an annual subsidy of fifty thousand crowns from the rents of the kirk to enable you to defend yourself more ably against England and her allies the Portuguese."

"This is well! the crowns are right welcome."

"An ambassador——"

"What—another?"

"Is coming from Rome, with a consecrated sword, which with his own sacred hands his Holiness has whetted on the altar-stone of St. Peter—yea, whetted against the English people and their king, whose fleet

is now out on the high seas to intercept the envoy and his gift."

"Indeed!"

"Thou seest how far these English will dare."

"If the ambassador is taken before Barton can reach the Downs, then d—n England—we'll go to war with her! and here into your hands I commit the books written by Henry, and brought hither by the Welsh bishop of St. David's, wherein he defends so boldly the principles of Luther."

"Good; I shall burn them on the first *occasion*, before my gate at St. Andrew's," replied the cardinal, as he threw them outside the chamber door to his page who waited in the gallery.

"With thy advice I broke off the meeting which Henry proposed at York; so we may now prepare for war in earnest—a war that will pour forth our Scottish blood like water; but on the plains of our hereditary foe. The Scottish people should be ever like a drawn sword, the king being the hilt—his subjects the blade."

"Gladly will I head the army," said the cardinal, whose eyes sparkled.

"Nay," replied James, drily, and with a smile; "should war be resolved on, I shall lead the army in person, as my predecessors have always done. What say the laws of the church on prelates leading armies?"

"It is forbidden by the canons of John VIII."

"Sir Oliver Sinclair, of Ravensheugh, is a brave serviteur of the crown, and he may be my lieutenant-general."

"Sire, Sir Oliver of Ravensheugh is a mere laird, and no lord will follow him to the field. But we are well prepared for any emergency. The Earl of Buchan

commands on the Eastern Marches, the Lord Sanquhar on the West; and the Lord Yester commands the Middle. Their paid bands of horse and foot are ever on the alert. Our ships of war are not so numerous as they soon shall be; but they fully equal those of England in every respect, for the *Unicorn*, the *Salamander*,* the *Morischer*, and the *Great Lion*, are each as large, if not larger, than the boasted *Harry*. Then we have the little frigate taken by Sir Robert Barton from the Admiral Howard, in Yarmouth Roads."

"The *Mary Willoughbie*?"

"Mounting twenty culverins, besides arquebuses and cross-bows; and we have six others on the stocks at the New Haven. Including those which came from France," continued the cardinal, consulting his note-book, "we have one hundred and fifty pieces of cannon in our arsenal; and Scotland was never better prepared for war than at the present hour—nay, not even in the days of James IV."

"For which I thank the ability of your eminence," replied James, who cordially disliked his uncle Henry. "My father James IV. entered England, whenever he chose, at the head of an army; but I, unfortunate! have a stiff-necked people, who, much as they love me, will not fight unless their parliament tells them to do so; and worse than all, Cardinal, the people—hate thee!"

"Faith, sire, they are ready to hate any one—the rabble."

"Impatient of thy power and princely offices, they think the royal authority will soon sink to nothing

* These two were burnt by the English, in 1544.

beneath the shadow of so great a minister. But what matters it? I long for war, because I am weary of life; while thou longest for it, simply because thou hatest the English. Lord Cardinal, I am come of a doomed race," said James, with a shudder, as the vague terror that his house was fated to fall with himself, came upon him, and a gloom spread over his manly brow. "I remember me of a prophecy that was made by a weird woman of Strathgryffe to Allan the great steward, 'that never one of his race should comb a grey head;' and fearfully hath that prophecy been verified!"

The eyes of the good king filled.

"Come my time when it may," he continued, "I know that my dear Scottish subjects will remember me long. Cardinal, my people call me *king of the pair*, and I am prouder of that title than of the thorny crown the Alexanders, the Constantines, and the Bruces have left me. The blessings of the poor and the lowly attend me when I walk abroad without guards, without retinue, without arms. *I hate the nobles*, for they are ever ready to barter their country and their God for foreign gold: and Scotland's nobles will one day be Scotland's destruction. Pardon this honest vanity; but I feel that to reign in the hearts of my people is a great and glorious thing. There are many kings in Europe, but not one is called the father of his poor but James Stuart of Scotland. I am ever among them. I visit the highways and the byways, the gloomy streets, the miserable garrets, and the famished cottages where pestilence, or poverty, or tyranny, have been. I know where misery is, or wrongs are endured. Disguised as a beggar, I discover them; as a king and

a gentleman I alleviate or revenge them. The hard hands I have shaken, and the humble hearts I have gladdened, will serve me to the last gasp; and the ingleside where a king has sat and supped his kail with the gude man, or toyed with his bairns, will long be remembered in tradition when the king and the clown are blended in one common dust. Thus I feel with joy that I shall go down to my grave at Holyrood with the blessings of my people, and shall be remembered long in the land, which my father bequeathed me from the field of Flodden."

The king paused; and the cardinal, remembering his pledge to Father St. Bernard, deemed this the best opportunity for opening the trenches.

"Sire, this is a good and holy frame of mind," said he; "and I sometimes see the truth of what Buchanan teaches (heretic and republican though he is), that impulses to good or evil are common to all ranks of men, and in these respects all men are equal."

"Cardinal, all men are equal, too, in the grave. Were a beggar laid beside me at Holyrood, he would be as great as me, and I no greater than he."

The cardinal could scarcely repress a gesture of impatience.

"I fear me," said he, "that the solitude of Falkland oppresses your majesty's mind?"

"It is in solitude that God speaks most to man; and I, oh cardinal, have been in solitude since my poor Magdalene was lost," replied James, kindly caressing the little dog.

"She is not lost, but gone before."

"Cardinal," said James, looking up with his hazel eyes full of tears, "I pray for her daily."

"One act of mercy performed in her name and memory, will do more for the soul of Magdalene than a thousand prayers."

The king looked earnestly, perhaps suspiciously, in the dark and majestic face of Beaton, and said,—

"Your eminence actually means this?"

"Most solemnly!"

"Then what is this act of mercy?"

"A pardon for the Lady Jane Seton."

James's bright eyes flashed with fire, and he twisted his brown moustache with anger.

"Now, by the Holy Communion, this is too much; a pardon for the destroyer of Magdalene of France—for this daughter of a Douglas, and sought in this tower of Falkland, the very chamber where her sire the Lord John of Ashkirk, and her grandsire Sir Archibald of Kilspindie, detained me once a prisoner, with a guard of some five hundred Douglasses, from whose surveillance I had to fly like a thief in the night! Lord cardinal, it is impossible."

It was seldom that James refused him a favour, and his eminence was piqued.

"There is but one day now, and I beseech your majesty to consider well."

"I *have* considered well. The Countess of Arran and I talked over the matter for three hours yesterday."

"The Countess of Arran!" muttered the cardinal; "women—women! there is ever mischief where they are concerned. It would have been well had they been altogether omitted in the great plan of human society."

"And to lessen this evil to the public thou keepest a dozen of them shut up in the tower at Creich, all

fair and jolly damosels," said the king, with something of his old raillery; "truly, Lord Cardinal, my subjects of Fife are much indebted to thee."

"I assure your majesty," said the cardinal, with increasing pique, "that to the best of my knowledge the whole trial and accusation hath been the prompting of revenge in Sir Adam Otterburn of Redhall."

"Of my lord advocate? Impossible! why, the man is virtuous as Scipio, and upright as Brutus?"

"But in their excessive zeal, the judges have wrongly construed the depositions. I implore you, to reflect; her death will make an irreparable breach between the races of Stuart and Douglas. War alone will not make a monarch illustrious. The splendour of valour and chivalry dazzles for a time; but a noble action lives in the memory of the people for ever."

"True; but beware, lest I deem thee a follower of Angus."

"I follow a master who is greater than all the princes of the earth," replied the stately prelate, warming; "and the opinions of the poor worms that crawl on its surface are nothing to me."

"Is this the fag-end of some old sermon?"

"Sire, thou mockest me, and I have not deserved it of thee," said the cardinal, rising with dignity; "but let not the ambassadors of foreign princes see thy weakness, and how thou carriest thy vengeance even against a helpless woman. Was it for such an act as this, that Francis the Magnanimous sent thee the collar of St. Michael; that the great Emperor Charles, the victor of sixty battles, sent thee the Golden Fleece; and English Henry, his noble Order of the Garter? I trow not. Glory and virtue cannot exist without mercy—the first is but the shadow of the other two."

In this case, close thy heart against hatred, and thou wilt soon become merciful, even to these hated Setons and Douglasses. Sire, sire, to thy many good actions add but this one more."

"Cardinal, thou pleadest well; but sayest nothing of my gallant Vipont, my comrade in many a hairbrained French adventure. I would have given my best horse and hound—even Bawtie, to have seen him confronting Abbot Mylne, and his fourteen black caps! But the sorceries, the vile sorceries of his lady——"

"Are about as true as the miracles of Mahomet."

"How! Did she not confess them to the whole bench?"

"True," replied the cardinal, with a smile; "when her tender limbs were being rent asunder by the rack."

"The rack! the rack! Oh, was it only on the rack she confessed these things?"

"As thou, sire, or I would have done, under similar circumstances."

The king seemed thunderstruck.

"A pen! a pen! though a Seton, and a Douglas's daughter, too, I forgive her—she is saved!"

A few hours after this, when the sun was setting on the East Lomond, Lewis Leslie of Balquhan, mounted on a fleet horse, with the pardon, signed, sealed, and secured in a pouch that hung at his waist-belt, was galloping through the parks of Falkland, on his way to the capital.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAIRD OF CLATTO.

"Farewell Falkland, the forteress of Fyfe,
Thy polite park, under the Lawmound law;
Sumtyme in thee, I led a lusty lyfe,
The fallow deer to see thaim raik on raw,
Court men to cum to thee, they stand grait aw,
Sayand thy burgh bene of all burrowis bail,
Because in thee, they never gat gude aill."

Complaynt of the Papingo.

By the machinations of Redhall and the subtle ability of Birrel, his messenger, there lay many a deadly barrier, and many a sharp sword, between the gallant Leslie and the city of Edinburgh.

The last rays of the sun had vanished from the furzy sides and green summit of the East Lomond once called the Hill of the Goats, in the language of the Celtic Scots, when he quitted the park of Falkland, and struck into an ancient horseway, which, under the shadow of many a venerable oak tree, led him towards Kirkforthar; and soon the hill of Clatto became visible as it rose about five miles distant on his left.

At that very time a party of horsemen, well armed with lances, two-handed swords, and daggers, and wearing steel caps, with jacks of mail, rode round by the

edge of a great and dreary peat-moss, which then lay at the base at Clatto hill ; and passing the old chapel of Kirkforthar, concealed themselves in a thicket of beech trees, near an ancient mill, some moss-grown fragments of which are still remaining near the highway. There two of their number dismounted, and borrowing a couple of shovels from a neighbouring cottage, with the utmost deliberation, after carefully removing the green turf, proceeded to dig a *grave*.

Of these horsemen, fifteen were Redhall's own vassals, led, not by Birrel, for that arch-conspirator had reserved unto himself another part in this cruel and cowardly drama, but by Tam Trotter and Dobbie, both of whom felt their personal importance and dignity increased to an unlimited extent by this command ; and Dobbie's cat-like visage wore a comical expression of martial ferocity, as it peeped out of the depths of a vast helmet of the sixteenth century.

The other horsemen were led by John Seaton of Clatto, the representative of a family which had long been infamous for its lawless acts and readiness to perform any outrage. The ruins of their tower are still to be seen at the south-east end of Lathrisk, as the parish was then named.

The old road from Cupar to Kinghorn passed through a gorge, called Clatto Den, and in the face of the mountain which overhung that narrow bridlepath there lay a cavern, the mouth of which was concealed, but whose recesses afforded a subterranean communication with the vaults of the strong tower above ; and there the bandit family of Clatto were wont to rush out and butcher those unsuspecting persons who rashly passed through the Den alone, either by night or by day. James IV., when travelling with two esquires, had nar-

rowly escaped assassination there, but cutting a passage through, escaped, leaving one of his assailants minus a hand. In his ignorance of the owner's free propensities, the king took shelter in the tower, when finding that Seaton's sixth son was maimed, the guilt of the family came to light; the secret passage to the tower was discovered; the old ruffian laird and all his sons were hanged, save John the youngest, who, being then a child, escaped to figure on the present occasion.

Justice was more severely administered under James V.; thus the exchequer of the Laird of Clatto being somewhat low, the accoutrements of his fourteen horsemen were rather dilapidated and rusty; but like their riders, the horses of his troop were fresh, strong, sinewy, and active. Having a plea anent meithes and marches with the Boswells of Dovan, the promise of a decision in his favour had drawn him from his lair, on the dark errand of Redhall.

The cavern that lay below his tower is now concealed, by the impending side of the Den having fallen down a few years ago, and choked up the entrance; but the peasantry still point to the place with fear and abhorrence.

Rendered thirsty by a six miles trot from the tower of Clatto, John Seaton, while his men were coolly digging a grave, went boldly to the mill of Kirkforthar, and demanded a cup of ale, upon which the miller gave it submissively, and without asking a question, for he knew that it was as much as the lives of his whole family were worth, to ask on what errand the Laird of Clatto was abroad in the gloaming.

"Harkee, miller," said he, with a grin, exhibiting (between his bushy moustaches and beard, which almost concealed the cheek-plates of his open helmet) a set

of those sharp white teeth, which bespeak a strong, healthy fellow, who is often hungry but always happy : " Harkee, Carle Miller; haud fast your yett, steek close your een and lugs, and steek them ticht, for the next twa hoors; and tak' ye tent to hear nocht else, but ablins the splash o' your milnwheel, till the mune glints abune the moss."

" Langer, gif it please ye, laird," replied the poor miller, trembling.

" Ou, that will be lang enow; but tak' tent o' my words; hear ye nocht, and see ye nocht; or I may come doon by the Mossend some braw nicht, and the miln o' Kirkforthar will be toom o' a tenant in the morning; keep close by your ingle cheek, carle, for the chields o' Clatto winna thole steering."

And carefully wiping a few drops of ale from his cuirass, which was magnificently cut, worked and inlaid with the most rare damascene work, he left the low thatched mill and sprang on horseback.

Meanwhile Leslie was galloping by the northern base of the East Lomond. His horse was a strong and active roadster, which he had received from the king's master stabler. Fortunately he had taken the precaution to retain his armour, which was a ribbed Italian suit, studded with gilded nails, and on the globose cuirass of which his coat of arms were engraved. His gauntlets were overlapping plates, without finger-scales, thus, with the ample steel hilt of the sword, forming a double protection for the right hand. His arms were a long straight rapier and dagger, and at the bow of his demipique saddle he had a pair of firelock dagues, or pistols. The latter every gentleman carried when travelling; and the former were as necessary to a cavalier of the time as his feather or spurs.

His horse having lost a shoe, the delay caused by the necessity of having this loss repaired by a roadside Vulcan made the evening dusk before he approached the mill of Kirkforthar. The summer moon shone brightly in the blue sky, and clearly and strongly the outlines of wood and mountain rose against it.

On Leslie's right rose the steep Lomond; and on his left extended the vast moss, amid the wilderness of which many a deep pool of water lay gleaming in the moonlight. The district was desolate and wild; but no idea of danger, or of molestation, occurred to the mind of the solitary horseman, who rapidly approached the mill of Kirkforthar, where the dark foliage of some old beech trees overshadowed both sides of the way; and where, save the cry of the cushat-dove, all was still as death. A red spark that glimmered among the trees, alone indicated where the mill lay.

Leslie checked the speed of his horse, as the road plunged down into this obscurity, which he had no sooner penetrated, than he found his course arrested by two bands of armed horsemen, who wheeled round their ranks from each side of the road, barring their passage by their levelled lances and uplifted swords. Well was it for Leslie that his fiery horse made a demi-volte, giving him time both to escape their weapons and unsheath his own.

"Make ye way, sirs! I am on the king's service!" he exclaimed, still backing his horse, but disdaining to fly. "Plague! the sheriff of Fife has surely bad deputies! But whoever you are, rascals, the life of Balquhan for the best life among ye!"

And dashing spurs into his horse, he broke through the whole band like a whirlwind, thrusting one through the body, bearing down another, unhorsing a third

with his foot; and passing unhurt through the hedge of steel around him, left John of Clatto and his ruffians to deposit one of their own number in the grave they had dug so carefully in the thicket near the mill.

He heard behind a storm of oaths and outcries, mingled with the clash of arms, and the rush of galloping hoofs, as the horsemen broke tumultuously out of the wooded hollow, and poured along the highway, in fierce pursuit of him. Heedless of their taunts and shouts, Leslie spurred on: he had now been made aware that there were those upon the road whose interest it was to intercept him. On, on he went by the skirts of the desolate and moonlighted moss, and his anxiety was not lessened by the reflection that he had to pass by the Tower of Bandon, whose proprietor was his enemy; and in a few minutes he saw the square outline of this fortalice, with its angular turrets and grated windows, rising above the roadway, among a group of old ash trees.

The pursuers were close behind.

Leslie was almost tempted to turn towards the moss; but to one so ignorant of its paths, such a measure might prove a certain death, while the risk was scarcely less in keeping near the barony of Bandon. Half-a-mile before him, on the open muirland, he saw several men on horseback, and his practised eye soon discovered that they were twelve in number, and armed, for the moonbeams were reflected from twelve helmets. Then his heart became filled with rage; for though he knew not why his path was thus beset, he knew that if he were slain, and the pardon was not delivered by a certain hour in Edinburgh, the unhappy Jane Seton, the promised bride of his friend, would assuredly be led forth to perish by a shameful and frightful death.

Many of the troop from which he had escaped, not

less than twelve, perhaps, were scarcely a hundred yards behind him ; now he saw as many more in front, and his forebodings told him they were the Lindesays of Bandon. At Balbirnie there stood an ancient cross, erected by a gentleman of the neighbourhood, who had slain another at that place ; and this cross (which is still standing) Leslie knew would afford him a sanctuary, if his pursuers were old catholics ; but he remembered that the Reformation had made vast progress in Fife, and that its proselytes would not hesitate to violate any sanctuary ; so instead of pressing onward to gain this bourne, supposing that the direct road might be beset still further on, he turned abruptly to the left, and plunged down a narrow strath, which led, as he was aware, towards the village of Markinch, and the strong castle of the Lundies of Balgonie.

A shout burst from the horsemen on the muir, on finding that he thus avoided them ; and joining with those who came from Kirkforthar, they all urged their horses to the utmost speed to intercept the gallant messenger. Many a dague and petronel were fired after him, and he heard the balls, as they whistled sharply past his ear, crash among the branches of the wayside trees, or sink into the flinty road ; but after some twenty or thirty shots, the firing ceased, as the troopers rode in such haste that they had not time to reload their firearms. On, on came horses and men at headlong speed, rushing, a troop of evil spirits, along the moon-lighted strath ; now dashing through coppice and underwood, then splashing through a brawling mountain burn ; now sweeping noiselessly over the yielding moss and heather muirland, and anon breasting gallantly up the pasture braes ; but Leslie being mounted on one of King James's best horses, fresh from its stall at

Falkland, though he did not leave his pursuers altogether behind, was yet enabled to keep a considerable distance between them and himself.

And now, upon a little eminence, the village of Markinch, with its venerable square steeple of the eleventh century, arose before him, and near it he fortunately left almost the half of his pursuers, floundering up to their girths in the deep and dangerous marsh which encircled the village on every side save one. Here to halt was vain; for the unscrupulous Lairds of Clatto and Bandon had men enough to sack and destroy the whole kirk-hamlet; so forward pressed the fugitive, intent on reaching the castle of Balgonie, or the ancient mansion of the Beatons of Balfour; where the archbishop of St. Andrews and his nephew, the great cardinal, were born. On, on yet! and he soon found himself among the woods of the Leven; dark and thick, old and stately, the beeches were in the full foliage of July, and the dense old Scottish firs intertwined their wiry branches with them: and now the river, broad, deep, and hoarse, in the full fury of its summer flood, swollen by a night of rain, lay rolling in foam before him; and upon its opposite bank rose, from a wooded eminence, the strong and lofty donjon tower of that time-honoured, but now extinct race, the brave old Lundies of Balgonie.

Glittering in the moonlight, like a silver torrent, the beautiful Leven swept out of the far and dark obscurity of its foliaged dell, and in its crystal depths (save where the foam-bells floated) the sombre outline of the castle, with its turrets, and the steep knowe on which it stood, with all its waving trees, were reflected in the deep and downward shadows.

There were now not less than twenty mounted spear-

men still upon his track, and, lo! a deep, fierce current lay foaming in his front. On a level sward, Leslie paused with irresolution, and before plunging into the stream, surveyed it, but surveyed in vain to find a ford.

He looked back. The hill he had descended was covered with whins and scattered trees; and there, far in advance of their comrades, came four horsemen, who were now close upon him. With a fervent, almost a ferocious prayer to Heaven, he drew his sword and awaited them, for at the first glance he discerned that one of the four was his enemy Bandon, who, to breathe his panting horse, advanced leisurely at a trot, before his three immediate followers.

"Guid e'en to thee, my light-heeled Leslie," said he, with a sardonic grin; "thou hast gien us a fast ride and a far one!"

"Beware, Bandon; I ride this night on the king's service."

"I ken that well."

"And still thou darest to molest me?"

"Yea, would I, though ye rode on the errand of the king of hell instead of that of the king of Scotland. Have at thee—for thou art a Leslie of Balquhan!"

"Beware, I tell thee, beware! My life is not my own to-night," cried Leslie, guarding the impending stroke of Lindesay's uplifted sword; "beware thee, till to-morrow only. I am the bearer of a royal pardon to Edinburgh."

"To thy grave alone thou bearest it!" cried the other, furiously.

Leslie parried the blow, and then replying by a thrust at the throat of his antagonist, before withdrawing his sword, bestowed a backhanded stroke at another horseman, who had covered him with his brass petronel,

a stroke, which rendered his better arm useless. Another deadly thrust relieved him of a second enemy, and then he had but two to deal with.

Round and round him, they both rode in circles, but by point and edge, he met their cuts and thrusts; till observing that Bandon was close to the edge of the stream, he suddenly put spurs to his horse, and charging him with the utmost fury, by a blow of his foot forced him right over the bank, where his horse fell upon him, and with its rider sank into the river. There Lindesay became entangled beneath the animal, which snorted, kicked, and plunged so violently, that he was swept unresistingly away by the current, and drowned. Next morning, the miller of Balgonie, on finding his machinery stopped and the dam running over, was horrified to see a horse and his rider, in armour, lying drowned and jammed under the great wooden wheel of his mill.

A volley of petronels from the bank above Leslie left him no time for further defence or reflection; and with a shout of defiance he leaped his horse boldly into the stream, and, regardless of the bullets which plunged into the water incessantly, exerted every energy to gain the opposite bank, using his hands and knees, half swimming, to relieve the animal of his burden (which was not a light one, the rider being in armour); keeping its dilated nostrils above water, and yielding a little to the current, he ultimately crossed, successfully and securely.

With flattened ears and upraised head, the broad-chested steed breasted gallantly the foaming water, and snorted with satisfaction on feeling the firm ground at the opposite side, where Leslie uttered a shout of triumph as he scrambled up the bank, and thus by one bold effort found himself free.

Oaths and cries of rage resounded among the woods behind, and many a trooper urged his horse towards the brink, but their hearts failed them, and not one dared to cross the deep and rapid Leven, by which their intended victim had been saved, and their leader swept away before their eyes. The lieutenant of the king's guard now leisurely examined the knees of his horse and the girths of his saddle; looked to his sword-belt and spur leathers; recharged his petronels, and glanced at the pouch which contained the pardon of Jane Seton. He then wiped his sword, and remounted.

Reflecting that the river was now between him and his enemies, that he was several miles out of the direct road, and that (except the ducking) he was not in the least the worse either of the ride or the combat, he resolved, instead of seeking shelter either at the place of Balfour or the castle of Balgonie, to push onwards to Kinghorn.

The ramparts of this stronghold, which are eighty feet in height, were glimmering in the moonbeams, above the tossing foliage, as he descended into the hollow which lies to the south of it, and then turned westward, little thinking that the ferocious Laird of Clatto, with Dobbie, Tam Trotter, and some fifteen horsemen, in anticipation of such a measure, had long before wheeled off to the right, and were pushing on the spur towards the Kinghorn road to intercept him.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FIGHT AT INVERTEIL.

"Let us hasten to receive them,
Placing in the foremost ranks,
Those who bear the arquebuses;
Let the horsemen next advance,
With the customary splendour
Of the harness and the lance."

CALDERON.

WITH a heart divided between emotion of rage and exultation, the fugitive messenger rode towards Kinghorn.

The aspect of the tract of country he crossed is very different now from what it was in those days. Many places that are bare pasture lands were then covered by dense thickets of natural wood; other places, that are now fertile and arable, were covered with broom and whins of such gigantic size that horsemen might have been concealed among them; while all the straths and glens were filled with the water which then flowed through innumerable mosses and marshes. Streams, which were then impassable rivers, have now, by the drainage of the land, and other agricultural improvements, shrunk to mere burns or mountain runnels; while those which were then burns and trouting streams, have, in many instances totally disappeared; and waters

such as those at the Boat-house bridge, in Linlithgowshire, and the Eden in Fifeshire, which had ferry-boats plying upon them, are now scarcely deeper or broader than a wayside drain. Thus, when, to save time, and the trouble of riding round in search of fords or bridges, the brave Leslie, all heavily armed as he was in Italian plate, boldly swam the winding Lochtie and the Ore, near the Spittalcots, he performed two gallant feats, for *then* those waters foamed in deep, broad currents between torn and rugged banks, with a breadth and force very different from what they exhibit in the present day, even during the fury of a winter speat.

But before he had entered on the moss and moor that lay between the Ore and an old mansion named the Temple Hall, which then belonged to the knights of Torphichen, the waning moon was disappearing behind the hills, and shed a cold pale light on the dreary waste that spread before the solitary rider.

Having lost all traces of the ancient drove road, which had guided him thus far, Leslie walked his horse forward with caution, to avoid the peat-bogs and pitfalls that now surrounded him; while, impelled either by the dreariness of the solitude on which he was entering, or by some vague presentiment of danger, he narrowly observed every bush and hillock as he approached, and listened for any passing sound.

The moon seemed to rest on the summit of the distant hills, the solid outline of which rose blackly against the blue sky. Light clouds were floating across her surface; but a clear white light was shed along the countless ridges of the muir—the moss-covered roots of an old primeval forest—which resembled the waves of a motionless sea.

A sharp, low whistle on his left, and somewhat in

advance of him, made Leslie look in that direction ; and he saw the moonbeams reflected back from something bright, that too evidently was not moss-water, but polished steel ; while two or three light puffs of smoke curled upward, showing where the matches of petronels were being blown for active service.

The moss was full of armed men !

" Fool that I was not to byde me at Balgonie ! " thought Leslie, as he put spurs to his jaded horse, and quickened its speed to a hand gallop. By his devious route he had now ridden fully twenty miles, over a frightful tract of country, full of steep hills and rocky glens, deep morasses brawling torrents. and hills covered with forest and brushwood ; he had forded three swollen rivers, and thus, like himself, his horse was already becoming exhausted.

" Hollo, Balquhan ! " cried a mocking voice ; " whither so fast ? Is your lady-love sick, or is your house on fire ? "

A shout of derisive laughter, together with the explosion of four long petronels, followed this remark ; and Leslie became aware, from the sudden bound and snort of pain given by his horse, as it shot away like the wind, that the poor animal was wounded ; one bullet had penetrated its near flank, and another had grazed its ears.

" The devil ! 'tis quite an arquebusade ! But I am getting used to such music to-night," thought Leslie, as he gave a wistful glance at the Temple Hall, which was not far off. All property which belonged to the Knights of St. John in Scotland afforded a safe sanctuary from debt and danger, and did so until a recent period ; but Leslie knew too well that his present pursuers would violate the holiest shrine between Cape

Wrath and the English frontier to reach him ; and that he had nothing to trust to but the blade of his sword and the heels of his horse ; for by the number of ambuscades, prepared in every direction, it became evident that his enemies, whoever they might be, were bent on his destruction.

Tall lances and bright helmets flashed in the moonlight, as the dark forms of many a horse and man arose from behind the heather knowes and clumps of moss and whin to join the chace ; and Leslie found that again the ferocious John of Clatto, with all his band, was riding on his trail.

Though the balls which had wounded his horse caused a great effusion of blood, they acted as spurs of fear and pain to accelerate its speed ; and Leslie soon heard the shouts, the clank of arms, and the rush of galloping hoofs growing fainter and fainter with every bound that his fierce strong charger made. The banks of the Ore, the desolate muir, and the grey Temple Hall, soon vanished in distance ; and he saw the spire of Kirkaldy, and its long and straggling town, rising on the left, from the low flat shore of the Firth, which lay beyond it, glimmering in the last light of the moon, and bringing forward, as from a brilliant background, the innumerable roofs and gables, clustered chimneys, and turretted edifices of the venerable burgh. Near him rose the hill and castle of Raith, where Sir John Melville, the great reformer, dwelt ; and nearer still, embosomed among summer woods, lay the Abbotshall, a seat of the abbot of Dunfermline, the site of which is still indicated by an old stupendous yew that grew before its gate. Right in the fugitive's front lay the broad green links of Kirkaldy, and the glittering estuary,

with the black rocky promontory of Kinghorn jutting boldly into its waters.

The strength of his horse was failing fast ; its eyes were blinded, and its head was drenched in the blood flowing from its wounded ears ; and he felt certain that, to turn from his straightforward course, to seek shelter in the neighbouring town, would only serve to exhaust it more. He knew well that the brave animal was dying beneath him, for with every convulsive bound of its foam-covered haunches, the blood gouts gushed forth upon the sandy turf.

Balwearie, in older times the birthplace of the wizard, Michael Scott, was left behind ; and now the hoarse brawl of the Teil—a flooded torrent—rang before him. He gave his horse the reins, and furiously applied the spurs, keeping his head back and his bridle-hand low, as he urged it to the flying leap. Lightly it rose into the air, cleared the stream, with all its banks of rock and bed of stones, but reached the opposite side only to die ; for the noble horse sank down with its forehead on the turf, and after making more than one fruitless effort to rise, rolled heavily over, stretched out its legs convulsively, and with that mournful cry which few hear, but a horse alone can give, expired.

At that moment, with brandished swords and panting steeds, six horsemen appeared on the opposite bank ; and the exhausted Leslie knew that nothing now remained for him but to sell his life as dearly as possible.

He was now but two miles from Kinghorn, and after all his exertions, he felt how hard it was to die ; and reflected that, with his life, the pardon of poor Jane Seton would be futile, or forfeited, as she would inevitably be put to death before additional tidings of the

king's favour came from Falkland. The very excess of his bitterness gave him a superhuman courage, and alone, on foot, he resolved to confront them all; but in doing so, to use every stratagem.

With the rapidity of thought, and unseen by them, he threw himself close beside his dead horse, the body of which was greeted by a shout of fierce exultation.

"Awa and on!" cried John of Clatto; "for gif ance he wins the brugh o' Kinghorn, the tulzie will be owre, and I sall tyne my plea anent the meithes and marches. On, on, ye fashious fules; hae your naigs nae mair mettle than the mules o' monks?"

Leslie grasped his drawn sword with both hands, and as the Laird of Clatto leaped the Teil, with one fierce back-handed stroke hamstringed his horse the moment its hind heels alighted near him.

With a tremendous curse, this ferocious rider with his steed tumbled prone to the earth; and as they fell, Leslie sprang up, and by the same daring manœuvre, unhorsed another, and slew him as he fell. Then rushing to the summit of the bank, that he might have all the advantage the acclivity could afford him, he stood resolutely on his guard. The rest of the band were yet far off, and by their leisurely trot, it was evident that their horses were breathless and blown.

"John of Clatto!" exclaimed Leslie, as he engaged that personage furiously, each swaying his sword with both hands on the hilt; "thou unchanged thief and son of a thief! now—now shalt thou receive the coward's reward."

"Fause coof!" retorted the other, with one of his ferocious laughs, as with a deadly coolness and activity he dealt his thrusts, while the force of his parries announced that his eye was sure, and his wrist was of

iron, as he hewed away with his long and trenchant sword; "Coward? ha! ha! 'tis a name never kent by a son o' auld Symon o' Clatto. Strike weel and surely, my bauld Balquhan, for by God and Macgriddel, I sall handsell thy braw harness in thy hettest bluid."

"Dog! it hath been handselled by the swords of better men!" exclaimed the furious Leslie, as by a single sweeping stroke his heavy sword beat down the guard of his adversary, breaking his blade like a withered reed, and, cleaving his helmet through the very cone, killed him on the spot. A curse was half uttered by its quivering lips, as the body fell backwards over the bank, and lay half merged in the water of the Teil. With his great natural courage exasperated to a terrible pitch by the knowledge that he must inevitably perish at the hands of these cowards, Leslie fiercely met the horsemen as they leaped the stream, and in succession fell sword in hand upon him. A shower of blows rang upon his tempered helmet, his eyes swam, and, amid a cloud of fire, it seemed as if a myriad of men and horses had assailed him, and as if as many swords were ringing in his ears, and flashing before his eyes.

He was soon beaten to the earth, and several men sprang from their horses to despatch him, when the shots of two petronels were heard, and two assailants sank heavily, dagger in hand, beside him, tearing up the grass with their hands and teeth in the agonies of death. A rush of horses followed, and Leslie found himself free!

Clatto's men had fled; and a young cavalier stood before him richly clad, with three tall feathers in his bonnet; he was mounted on a superb black horse, and in each hand had a petronel, from the barrels of which the smoke was curling. The drawn swords of his six

mounted attendants were gleaming in the bright twilight of the July morning, for day was already glimmering over the far horizon of the German Sea. The features of this deliverer were noble, but delicate; his eyebrows and closely clipped moustachioes were coalblack, his lips were red, and cut like those of a woman, but his large dark eyes sparkled with courage and animation.

"Now, by heaven, 'tis our loving cousin and clansman, Balquhan!" he exclaimed; for in those days, "when old simplicity was in its prime," every man of the same name in Scotland was designated *loving cousin*.

"Sir Norman Leslie," said the lieutenant of the guard, as with thankfulness and respect he greeted the gallant Master of Rothes, the son and heir of the earl, his chief, "thou hast saved me from a cruel and bitter death! what do I owe thee?"

"Two brass bullets at a similar juncture."

"May it never happen!" said the young baron, to which the Master replied with a reckless laugh, in which his followers joined.

"Balquhan," said he, "this gentleman is your cousin—my uncle, John of Parkhill. Here are three men and two hamstrung horses lying on the grass! By St. Mary! my true Leslie, thou hast this night handled the sword as if it had been thine own invention."

"Anent what hath all this been?" asked John Leslie of Parkhill, an elderly gentleman, sheathing his sword.

"Heaven only knows, sir," replied Leslie, as he caught the bridle of a riderless horse, and leaping into the saddle began to examine the petronels that were attached to it.

"They seem to have found you a rough jousting!"

"I am riding on the king's service, with a pardon for the Lady Seton."

"The Lady Seton!" they all repeated, in varying tones of astonishment and satisfaction.

"Yes, sirs, I am boune for Edinburgh, and have been thrice beset by horsemen, and thrice have swam a river, the Leven, the Ore, and the Lochtie!"

"Sheriff of Fife, what say you to this?" said Parkhill to Norman Leslie.

"That it shall be looked to, and that sharply," replied the young Master of Rothies, as he replaced his pistols in the holsters; "a harmless rider, a messenger of mercy on God's own service, to be molested thus!"

"Besetting the highway—'tis a capital crime."

"Perhaps John of Clatto (for it was he) thought that messengers of mercy, or of heaven, seldom ride in coats of mail."

"To thy spurs, Balquhan, and on!" said the Master; "the poor dame Seton will assuredly fall a victim to the malice of the Hamiltons at midnight—*this midnight*, for see, the day is dawning. They were setting the stake, and tarring the faggots, on the castle bank, as we left Edinburgh by the West Port last night."

"I go to the *King's Horn* hostel," said Balquhan; "would I were there, for I am drenched like a water-dog, and well nigh wearied to death. Farewell."

"Take ye care, sir," cried John of Parkhill.

"Come now, you jest, my cousin," said the lieutenant, jocularly; "does a Leslie ever fall from his horse?"

"I only mean, beware thee while at Kinghorn, and keep thine errand secret; for there are several men of the house of Arran in the burgh, and their nags are stabled at the very hostel thou hast named."

"Nay, nay, uncle of mine," said the fiery Norman, "no Hamilton would arrest the pardon of any woman; then how much less that of a lady of high name and gentle blood!"

"Nephew Norman, we know not the tricks of which the Lord Arran and his faction are capable; and to whom shall we attribute this treble molestation of our cousin, the king's messenger?"

"True—adieu."

"Adieu, sirs, with many fair thanks for this good service."

They separated, and Balquhan rode on, feeling in his heart that he could slay all who bore the name of Hamilton; for the idea that Redhall was his evil genius never once occurred to him.

Those Leslie's who had saved him were, nine years after, among the conspirators who slew the great cardinal in his castle at St. Andrews, less to avenge the frightful deaths of the early martyrs, than as the hired assassins of Henry VIII.; and twenty years after, the fiery Master of Rothes died in the battle of St. Quentin, fighting valiantly at the head of thirty Scottish gens d'armes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE KING'S HORN.

"Be yet advised, nor urge me to an outrage ;
Thy power is lost—unhand me——"

Edward the Black Prince.

THE clock of St. Leonard's tower struck three as Leslie entered the old burgh of Kinghorn, and rode through its steep and straggling, narrow and deserted wynds, to the hostelry with which the reader is already acquainted. Though a vast sheet of pale light was spread across the east, sunrise was nearly an hour distant, and the whole town was silent as some ruined city in a desert; every door was closed, and not a single face appeared at the rusty gratings of the street windows.

It was not until after much noise and vociferation with the drowsy peddies and stable boys that Leslie gained admittance to the inn yard, and from the yard obtained ingress to the mansion, where his whole aspect excited fear and suspicion. His armour was dimmed by water, and rusted with dew, cut, hacked, and bloody; the straps were loose and torn; he was feverish and excited; and there was a stern determination in his bearing, as he carefully took his petronels from his saddle-bow, and, ordering the attendants to look

well to his horse against the time of the ferry boat sailing, entered the first empty chamber that offered itself.

He looked first to the pardon, which, notwithstanding his frequent immersions, was dry and secure; he looked next to the wheel-locks of his fire-arms, which he laid on his pillow ready for immediate service. Thereafter, he examined his apartment. The window was two stories from the ground, and a harrow-grating amply secured it. Like all others in that age, the door was secured by a multiplicity of bars, all of which he shot into their sockets; and thereafter piled behind them all the available furniture—a great oak almrie, a meal-girnel, four chairs, and, lastly, the table.

He then took off his armour, and found that his clothing was almost dry.

“Come, ’tis well,” thought he; “save three pricks and four scratches, I am not a whit the worse, and have still six hours for sleeping and dreaming of merry Marion.”

And after assuring himself that he could not be taken in flank either by trap-door or sliding panels, this brave and wary soldier threw himself on the bed, and behind his barricades slept soundly and securely.

The ferry-boat was to sail at ten in the forenoon.

Half-an-hour before that time Leslie awoke, and sprang up quite refreshed. His first glance was at his barricade.

“Oho! I have been beset even here!” said he, on perceiving that the door had been forced, and the heavy almrie and girnel pushed about three inches inwards, by which the chairs had been overturned, thus baffling the assault, as their fall had scared the intruders.

The sun was shining brightly on the river, and the

merchants were opening their booths, and displaying their goods under the stone arcades of the principal wynd.

"This devilish piece of paper is likely to cost me dear. I find I must still be guarded," thought Leslie, as he minutely examined his iron trappings, stuck his petronels in his belt, and, with his sheathed sword under his arm, descended to the hall of the hostel, and ordered breakfast, but without mentioning the attempt which had too evidently been made to disturb his privacy. Looking sharply around, he seated himself at the arched ingle, where a comfortable fire was blazing, and above which appeared a rude fresco painting, which represented St. Leonard, the patron of Kinghorn, surrounded by a swarm of cherubs in the forest of Limoges.

"Quick, old hag—my breakfast," said the traveller to the landlady; "let your rascals look well to my horse, or look well to themselves if they fail."

The gudewife, a slipshod and sullen-looking crone, with a nose and chin that were nearly meeting, a coif of the time of James III., and an enormous bunch of keys, being a little scared by the stern and distrustful aspect of Leslie, who sat down by the table with his helmet on, left a buxom damsel to attend on him, and retired. The young soldier found that his indignation could no way extend to her substitute; for her cheeks were blooming, and her eyes sparkling with health and good-humour; she wore a very piquant, short linen jacket, short petticoat, and her brown hair tied up in a blue silk snood, after the fashion of unmarried girls in Scotland.

A fowl, from among several that were roasting on the spit, cheese, cakes, and honey, cold beef, eggs and bacon, with the addition of ale, formed then, as now, the

staples for breakfast, and while it was preparing, Leslie solaced himself by whistling the *March to Harlaw*, and, by means of a piece of half-burned wood, decorating with an enormous pair of mustachioes each of the fat little cherubim which surrounded the figure of St. Leonard; an amusement which neither the gudewife, nor the diminutive gudeman, whom she seemed to rule with "a rod of iron," dared to interrupt.

"This is for thee, my rosy belle," said Leslie, kissing the plump cheek of the waiting-maid, after breakfast, "together with this French crown; as for the rascal, thy master, and the hag, thy mistress, let them rejoice that I have not burned the house about their ears, were it but to smoke out certain Hamiltons, who, I am assured, are within it. Thou hearest me, fellow?" added Leslie, as he passed the landlord, who, sheepishly, and bonnet in hand, was standing at the door of the house.

"I do, gude sir, but understand ye nocht."

"Nor do I you; but wherefore was my door forced last night—this morning, I should say—eh, thou rascally Fifer?"

"I swear to ye, noble sir, that, under God, I ken nocht o't," replied the poor man, with the utmost earnestness.

"It may be so, for I see that, in thine own house, thou art but Joan Tamson's man, as the saw has it."

The landlord gave a sickly smile.

"Harkee, gudeman, is thy better-half a Hamilton?"

"To my sorrow, I ken she is, sir," sighed the hosteller, in a whisper; "for never one of her name enters Fife, between the East and West Neuk, without lying a week and mair at the *King's Horn*, and never a bodle will she take for the lawing, for they are a' her cousins

to the hundredth degree, and will scarcely let me call my soul my ain."

"Then, which of her worthy cousins are here now?"

"Sir John Hamilton of Kincavil," replied the gude-man, setting his teeth on edge.

"And his room?——"

"Was the next to yours."

"Hum! indeed; and this Sir John extends his patronage to you, gudeman—eh?"

"He pays like a prince, to be sure; for he had a fancy for my gudewife in her young days."

"He is a man of taste, Kincavil!" said Leslie, smiling; "but where is my horse?"

"My son holds it at the gate."

"How, the devil! is that tall fellow thy son?"

"No," replied the little man, with a grin of bitterness; "he is the son of my wife."

As Leslie slipped another crown into the hand of the host, and was turning away, a tall, swaggering cavalier—the same whom Roland Vipont had fought with and wounded near the Water Gate, as related in a preceding chapter of this history—brushed past him somewhat unceremoniously.

"Sir John of Kincavil!" said Leslie, with angry surprise.

"Well, sir! at your service," replied the other, swelling up in his rose-coloured doublet, and resting his left hand in the bowl hilt of his long rapier, as he assumed a lofty attitude.

"Is this to be taken as an insult?"

"It is to be taken just as you please," replied the other, twirling his moustachio.

"Take care, sir. I am on the king's service."

"Does that entitle you to occupy the whole doorway of the *King's Horn*?"

"We are not equally armed—you see my coat of mail."

"Oh, that matters little—behold!" said Kincavil, as he opened the collar of his doublet, and displayed below it a mail shirt of exquisite workmanship. "We are quite equal, my friend," he added, clapping Leslie with easy familiarity on the shoulder, while a number of armed men, who, by their badges, seemed to be his followers, crowded ominously round them.

"Kincavil!" said Leslie, scornfully, "the next time thou touchest me, pray do so with a hand that is gloved."

"A thousand pardons," sneered Kincavil, whose insolence was as proverbial as his deadly skill and admirable swordsmanship, "I forgot thou wert *Falkland bred*."

This was a phrase of the time to signify foppery, affectation, and refined manner. Leslie's eyes flashed with rage, but he leaped on his horse, saying—

"I know your object well, villain, to involve me in a brawl; but you will fail. Taunt me as you please, I will not draw my sword unless I am molested; and woe unto them who do so. To-morrow I will be a free man, and at noon will await you, braggart, on the sands of Leith, near the chapel of St. Nicholas, where seek me if you dare."

A shout of derisive laughter followed him; but, stifling his rage, he heard without heeding it, and in ten minutes more was on board the ferry-boat, which endeavoured to beat across the river against a strong head wind.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BLUEGOWN.

"Bless your honour, noble gentleman,
Remember a poor soldier."

Auchindrane, Act I.

WE have now the events of only one night to relate, but these events are of the most varied description.

Father St. Bernard, the kind and philanthropic old clergyman, had prayed fervently that the cardinal, among the multitude of public matters that weighed upon his master-mind, would remember his promise; and as earnestly had he implored Providence to inspire the heart of James with more than his usual mercy, that a pardon might be granted to his poor penitent, for so a confessor always termed those under his care in the olden time.

Every hour after the cardinal's departure he had sought Sir James Riddel, in the hope that tidings had arrived from Falkland; but hour after hour passed; two weary days, and two still more weary nights elapsed; but no tidings came of the pardon, and no messenger.

Could the cardinal have forgotten his promise? or had he failed in his purpose? The poor friar racked

his invention with suggestions, but hope died as the evening of the fatal 25th drew on; and Father St. Bernard was forced to confess to himself that she was lost; for the hour at which the ferryboat usually arrived at Leith was long since passed. From the rampart of David's Tower he had seen it pass the Beacon Rock and enter the harbour, and with a beating heart he waited, but Leslie never came.

He saw the people already gathering in groups and crowds to witness the frightful execution, and the old man wept as he sought the knightly governor of the fortress for the last time, and turned away hopeless.

"Thou good and pious priest!" said Sir James Riddel, touched by the old man's grief, and warmed into a betrayal of his own religious opinions, "why art thou not, as I am, a Protestant?"

"Thou good and valiant soldier! why art thou not, as thy father was before thee, a pious Catholic and true?" asked the prebend, in the same tone, as he descended from the citadel towards the gate of King David's Tower, to visit Jane Seton for the last time. At that moment the great copper bell of the fortress, which swung at the gable of a tower called the Gunhouse, tolled the hour of nine.

She was to die at twelve.

Among all the snares laid for the destruction of Leslie, and to obtain the document he carried, Birrel had reserved unto himself the last, and, failing others, (which he scarcely believed could fail,) the surest, and perhaps most deadly plan for his death.

The road between Edinburgh and Leith was then a lonely, and (after dusk) unfrequented place. Between the monastery of Greenside, which lay at the foot of the Calton Hill, and almost in the very gorge that descends

to the foot of Leith Wynd and the Port St. Anthony, there was not a house or edifice save a little wayside oratory; and thus between the Loch and village of Restalrig on the east, and the old house of Roystoun, near the shore on the west, all the country was open pastureland, links, or muir, with here and there a small farm-cot at its boundaries, with a kailyard and oxgang of arable land, watered by the runnels that ran into the river Leith, which then was twice, and in some places, four times its present breadth, covering great pieces of holm-land at Comely-bank, and the Canon-mills, where the old scaurs that overhung its margin are still visible.

The few persons who traversed Leith Loan on the 25th July, 1537, could not have failed to remark a man wearing the well-known garb of a Bluegown, one of the privileged mendicants of the charitable olden time. These received a new cassock on every anniversary of the king's birth, together with a penny for every year of his age. The Bluegowns of the Stuart times seldom received much, as the monarchs of that gallant race were generally cut off in early life by war or misfortune; but the Bluegowns of later years, when kings have been more economical of their persons, have been wont to hail the day of his birth with joy; and those of George III. drew more shillings Scots than ever did other beadsmen since the society was instituted.

With a black cross sewed on the breast of his long blue cassock, as an emblem of sorrow for the late queen's death, and his face concealed in his hood, the beggar, who appeared lame in his left, and also lacked the right hand, which was hidden in the folds of his ample garment, sat by the wayside; and whenever a person passed (which was very seldom) he either begged for alms in a low peevish voice, or repeated an *ave* to show

how very good and pious he was, notwithstanding the hardness and humility of his lot in life.

This beggar was no other than Nichol Birrel; the hood concealed his yellow visage, his cunning eyes, and matted beard, as the blue gown did a shirt of mail, a belt full of daggers and pistolettes, and his right hand, which grasped a dague, loaded with two brass bullets. Being certain that Leslie could not escape all the ambuscades prepared for him in Fife, where Dobbie and Trotter, with fifteen troopers from Redhall, John of Clatto, with his lawless men, Lindesay of Bandon, with *his* ruffians, and lastly, Kincavil, a deadly fencer and professed duellist, were all induced, under various instigations, and from various motives, to beset his path, Birrel kept but a careless watch, looking upon Leslie as one whom he had not the least expectation of seeing.

It was one of those beautiful evenings which are common to July; and, at a part of the road which afforded him a view of St. Anthony's Port, he lay on a grassy bank, where a thicket of hawthorn overhung the roadway, which was then but a narrow, deep, and rugged bridle-path.

Behind lay Lochend and the house of the Logans, perched on a rock; before him stretched the level muir and pasture-land which joined the Firth at the New Haven, which had been constructed by James IV., all an open and unenclosed prairie; and across it shone the hot rays of the sun then sinking towards the dark peaks of the Ochil mountains. The air was close and still; there was no sound but the casual rustle of a leaf, or the "drowsy hum" of the mountain bees as they floated over the verdant grass, and the air was filled with the perfume of the fragrant hawthorn.

The whirr of the nutbrown partridge as it rose from

among the long grass ; the voice of the blackbird and thrush, as they sang joyously among the gnarled branches of an aged thorn-tree ; the solitude of that place, though it lay between a fortified capital and its thriving seaport, had no charm for the disguised ruffian, nor could they wile him from his deadly purpose.

Thrice that day had horsemen left the Port St. Anthony, and thrice had the assassin grasped his weapon with the fellest intent. The first was the young Lord Lindesay, and he dashed up the Loan with all his feathers waving, and embroidery glittering in the sun. He had not gone to Falkland, because the Lady Margaret Beaton remained at her father's archiepiscopal palace. The second rider was a knight of Torpichen, in his black mantle, with its white cross ; and the third was Sir Andrew Preston, of Gourtown. None of these were in armour, as Birrel knew Leslie was sure to be, so, at their approach, his hand three times relinquished the pommel-butt of his dagger. Each, as he passed, threw alms to the supposed beadsman, and disappeared in the gorge that led towards the city.

Mid-day passed, and heavily the still sultry afternoon lagged on. The Bluegown took from his wallet some bread and cheese, a roasted fowl, and flask of usquebaugh, and proceeded to dine under the bower of sweet hawthorn.

While engaged in this pleasing occupation, the sound of voices and hoofs arrested his attention ; he looked up, and beheld a young lady, with several attendants on foot and on horseback, dashing straight towards him across the level muir, from the east, and continuing a rapid gallop until she gained the opposite bank of the roadway, where she reined up her horse, and looked hurriedly round.

She was a tall and stately-looking girl, with bright blue eyes, a blooming complexion, and a profusion of flaxen-coloured hair, that fell in heavy ringlets from under her scarlet velvet hood. She was richly attired; and as no one could then be completely dressed for company, for riding, or promenading, without a leather glove, with a hawk sitting thereon, she bore one on her right hand, while her left grasped the reins of her fiery and spirited horse. The bold and beautiful girl was Marion Logan of Restalrig.

A cloud rested on the usually happy aspect of her broad fair brow, and her sunnysmile was gone, for her thoughts were full of the misfortunes that encircled her friend Jane Seton. Two men on foot ran after this party with all their speed; strapped over his shoulders, each had a square frame of green-painted wood, on the spars of which sat a number of hawks of various breeds, accoutred with plumed hoods, through which their fierce red eyes were glancing, and having little silver bells, which jangled with every motion. Around their necks were silver collars, whereon was engraved the legend—"Zis gudelie hawk belangis vnto y^e Knicht, Schyr Robert Logan of Restalrig and zat ilk."

"Dost thou see nothing of my father?" asked the young lady of her attendants.

"I see nocht, madam," replied an armed horseman, who wore the Logan's livery, and had their crest embroidered on the sleeve of his pyne doublet; "but this auld Blewgoon may. Harkee, puir body," he added, addressing the disguised Birrel; "saw ye oucht o' a gentleman in a suit o' plum-colored taffeta, wi' a white ostrich feather in his bonnet?"

"Had he a blue mantle?"

"Yes."

"Laced wi siller pasements?"

"Yes—the very same!"

"Riding——"

"A roan-colored horse."

"With siller bells at his bridle?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Well then, I havena seen oucht o' him."

"God confound thee! thou wordy carle, dost laugh at us?" said a falconer, angrily, as he shook his long pole threateningly towards Birrel, whose natural insolence could not omit this opportunity of indulging itself a little.

"'Twas an evil day this to come forth hawking," said the young lady; "the day on which my dearest friend is to die——"

"Now haud ye, Lady Marion," said the white-haired falconer, cautiously; "for ken ye not, that noble though that lady be, it's far frae being safe or wise to claim friendship wi' her at the present time. If Sir Robert turned towards the Corstorphine marshes——"

"I hope not, for they are both dangerous and deep," said the young lady, looking westward, and shading her large blue eyes with an ungloved hand, that was white as the hawthorn blossom. "God knoweth how sadly and unwillingly I came forth this day; and it was but to please him I forsook our little oratory for the saddle. Thou knowest my father, Steenie——?"

"Aye, the auld knicht winna thole steerin," replied the old falconer, as he also shaded his sunburned face with a large brown hand, and scanned the glowing west.

"'Tis very strange, Steenie—where was my father seen last?"

The castle of Kilspindie, with its great square tower and sandy shore, the beautiful Bay of Aberlady, with its sheltered village, were now astern; and nothing was seen but the bluff headland of Gulane-ness, with the white foam rising like smoke against its tremendous front of rocks.

Wan gleams of uncertain light shot over the desolate estuary; the whole prospect was dreary and alarming. Strong, active, and determined, Lord Ashkirk might have reached the shore by swimming, but Sybil——

He struck his sail almost in despair, and now bent all his unwearying energy to bale out his little craft; for she was filling fast, and he fully expected to be swamped by every mountain-like wave, that with its monstrous head curling aloft, and snowy with foam—a foam rendered yet more terrible by the gloom and obscurity around it—rolled on towards the rocks of Gulane-ness, drenching the labouring skiff in its passage, and threatening to engulf it in an abyss for ever.

He was without fear for himself; but when he beheld Sybil crouching down beside him, his heart filled with anxiety and dread, with suspense and remorse; and he reflected that were the catastrophe, which he dreaded and expected every moment, to happen—he thrust away the thought as too horrible to contemplate, and baled on with renewed energy, pausing only to kiss the upturned brow of Sybil, or press her trembling hands. They were becoming very cold.

A thousand thoughts of home and friends, of love and life, came vividly on her mind; and Sybil reflected that she was happy even on yonder closely guarded island, when she contrasted the security and

hope it afforded with the danger and importance of their present predicament.

Day began to dawn in the east and with it Mrs Sybil hailed it; for through mistiness and fog she had seen and admired the unvarying energy of her lover in keeping the boat afloat in such a frightful sea. His exertions were almost superhuman, for her safety depended upon them.

They were now past that tremendous promontory

Uninfluenced by its bad omen the waves were more smooth; and again the earl spread his sail and made another vain attempt to gain the northern shore.

A sickly yellow glow spread over the east, as the sun arose from the ocean enveloped in vapour clouds. The wind had not yet spent its fury; the whole aspect of the sky and water was dark and dreary. The summit of the land was veiled in mist; its shore was fringed with rocks, on which the surf was breaking; and from these rocks the wind blew fierce and strong. No vessel was in sight; and not a living thing was visible but the startled seamews and kittiwakes, the gulls and cormorants, that were whirled past them, swimming in the wind, which often dashed them into the waves of the upheaved water.

"Now Heaven be thy protection, my Sybil!" exclaimed the earl, as he made extensive search for help. "I can do no more."

Worn out by toil, and exhausted now by loss of blood from a flesh wound received from the waves of the sea, and still more overcome by his fatigue and unaided exertions during so many hours to trim the vessel and keep her floating, he now found himself conquered, and completely overcome. He was just as weak, his strength

"Galloping over the mains, after his favourite hawk, madam," replied a servitor, touching his bonnet.

"Mercy ! if he should have mistaken the way, and fallen into the moss of Craigcrook."

"Toots, bairn !" replied the falconer ; "he kens our well the dreich hole where, last Lammastide, we saw young Adamson o' Craigcrook gae down in the floe baith horse and man, till even the point o' his lance vanished ; and there they lie yet !"

"Look, Steenie ; is not yonder bird a hawk ? See how it ascends from Pilrig—up, and up !"

The tramp of a horse arrested their attention.

A man on horseback, who left the gate of St. Anthony, came galloping from Leith ; his armour flashed in the setting sun, and a cloud of dust rolled under the hoofs of his horse.

"In harness," said one falconer.

"He is not Sir Robert," muttered another.

"St. Mary ! how he drives his horse !" exclaimed Marion Logan.

"It is Leslie of Balquhan !" growled Birrel, ferociously, as he grasped his dagger. "Now, curse be on my folly that sent not this butterfly, with her attendant wasps, hence on a fool's errand."

The continual glitter of the rider's armour showed that he was richly accoutred, and the incredible speed at which he rode announced that he was nobly mounted. In three minutes he reined up his horse at the foot of the bank, where, with a glow of pleasure beaming in her beautiful face, Marion Logan recognised him.

"Lewis Leslie !" she exclaimed, and kissed her hand frankly to him, for he was her favoured lover.

"At your service, my dear madam," replied the officer of the arquebusiers, bowing to his very saddle.

Birrel's eyes were starting from his head, as he strained his ears to listen.

"From whence?"

"Falkland."

"Falkland! and why so fast?"

"Oh rejoice, my dear Lady Marion! I have here the king's gracious pardon for Jane Seton; she is saved; and one hour from this will see her free!"

The brave young cavalier shook the pouch that hung at the girdle, which Marion had embroidered for him.

"The *pouch*! d—nation wither my tongue, for it alone hath made this woman and her varlets loiter, instead of hurrying them away," said Birrel, as he limped past, and posted himself a few hundred yards farther off.

"Pardoned!—Jeanie pardoned!" said Marion, whose blue eyes sparkled with tears and joy. "Can it be? Lewis, Lewis, how much I love you at this moment! For this good news I would let you have a pretty kiss, but for all those eyes about us. Oh, what blessed tidings for us!"

"Still more blessed for her, I think, and for my brave friend Vipont too! 'Tis all the cardinal's doing; his good offices have achieved this."

"The cardinal!"

"Faith, it is thought dangerous for a woman to accept a favour at his hand. But dost think, Marion, that such a gallant man will permit such an outrage upon youth and beauty as Abbot Mylnes' sentence to be carried into effect? No, no! Long live the cardinal say I. But what a night I have had of it, Marion! nearly fifty scoundrel horsemen have tried to intercept and cut me off."

"Hamiltons?"

"Hamiltons or hell-hounds, I know not which," replied Leslie, angrily; "but I have given more than one the Leslie's lick, and have escaped them, blessed be Heaven!"

"My brave friend! 'tis like thee."

"Lady Marion," said Steenie, the falconer, approaching; "Sir Robert is in sight; see yonder, by the bank o' the loch. Noo he flees his goshawk at a heron," he added, as the burly old knight was seen to rein up his horse, and let the bird slip from his wrist. "So—brawly cuisten off! See, the hawk is noo aboon, and noo it stoops to the quarry!" said the venerable servitor, as he waved his broad bonnet; "it's a true bird o' my ain training. See how the sly heron turns up her belly—ah, the lang leggit devil! she seeks to use baith claws and bill; but the hawk passes—noo the hawk tak's her at the sowse, and strikes doon. No; it's these Milan bells, they're owre full i' the sound, and spoil the bird i' the mounting. See, my brave bird plumes her—noo, doon for a croon, like a bowshot!"

The birds disappeared among the sedges.

"Farewell, Leslie," said Marion; "on, on to the Castle, and delay not your errand of mercy. But come soon to see us; you know well how lonely we are on the Rig yonder, and how well my father loves you. How rejoiced he will be to hear these tidings of our poor Jeanie Seton; my faith, he will drink a deep tankard to-night, for it was but to shake off the dolours he rode forth to-day, and neither to hunt nor to hawk."

"Then, my Marion, to-morrow, at noon, I will stable my horse at Restalrig."

"We will expect you."

"My dutiful commendations to the good knight your father, and meantime, adieu."

With eyes full of affection they kissed their hands to each other, and separated.

Whipping up her tall and fiery horse, with her veil and her long tresses floating behind, Marion, by one flying leap, made it clear the roadway, and gain the summit of the opposite bank, from whence her lover saw her (followed by her attendants) cantering across the fields towards the sheet of water which her father's old manor-house still overhangs. She went at a pace which put the poor falconers, who were on foot, to their mettle; and the young laird of Balquhan, despite his anxiety to deliver the important paper, which had thrice nearly cost him his life, checked the speed of his charger to look after the retiring figure of her he loved.

He little knew what that brief pause and that last glance after Marion Logan were to cost him.

Birrel's heart danced with joy to see him loitering, while the young lady and her armed servants were fast retiring beyond ear-shot.

The sun had now set, and the dun blaze of light it shed from the western hills across the muir of Wardie was dying away. The whole Loan, from the round arch of St. Anthony to where it disappeared under the brow of the Calton, was deserted. The Calton then was bare, bleak, and desolate, or covered by waving furze, broad-leaved fern, or dark whin; so was the opposite bank, which sloped up to the height of eighty feet, and was crowned by the chapel and little hamlet of St. Ninian, the smoke of which was visible as it ascended into the calm air from the cottage chimneys.

This knoll was named Moultrays Hill; and between

it and the Calton the narrow road plunged down into the gorge, where the church of the Trinity lay, passing, on the left, the Carmelite Friary of the Holy Cross at Greenside. Standing forward in strong relief from the dark shoulder of the hill, and against the blue sky, the broad boundary, the stone cross and crow-stepped gables of this edifice, were visible from a group of old elm trees, under which Birrel posted himself. As Leslie approached, the assassin shrank under their branches, drew his hood over his face, and gave a last glance to the wheel-lock of his dagger.

A leer of cruelty and malice shone in his eyes, and a horrible smile curled his square lips, as, with a limping step, he approached the centre of the path.

"Gie a plack or a bodle, sir, to help a puir carle that hasna broken a bannock these three days and mair."

"Try the Carmelites, my good friend," replied Leslie, riding hurriedly on.

"The Virgin bless you, noble sir," continued Birrel, hobbling after him; "mind a puir soldier of Sanct John, that lost his arm fighting under the Preceptor at the battle o' Haddenrig?"

"An old soldier?" said Leslie, checking his horse; "by the three kings of Cologne, an old soldier shall never in vain seek alms of me! Here, thou cunning carle, and say an *ave* for me to-night;" he stooped to feel for a coin in the purse which hung at his sword-belt; then Birrel drew forth the arm that appeared to be maimed, and levelled his dagger full at the ear of the unsuspecting horseman; his glistening eye glared along the burnished barrel; the wheel revolved; a bright flash, the sharp report, and a low groan followed.

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Leslie rolled lifeless in the dust beneath his horse's hoofs, with the blood flowing from his mouth. The muzzle of the dagger having been but three inches from his helmet, two brass balls had passed through his brain, and as the wretch turned him over, he saw in a moment that the hapless cavalier was far beyond the skill even of John of the Silvermills, the Scottish Galen and Avicenna of his age.

Birrel gave one ferocious glance around him to see that none were near; he gave another at the glazing eyes turned back within their sockets, the relaxed jaw and noble features of Leslie, which in a moment had become livid and horrible, as in the pale twilight they stiffened into the rigidity of death.

From the dead youth's glittering baldrick he tore away the leathern pouch, and rending it with his dog-like teeth (for he was in too great haste to undo the buckles), drew forth the pardon, and fled towards the city.

And there on the road the slain man lay, with the dew and the darkness descending upon him; and he felt not one and saw not the other.

Near him, and under the dark shadow of the hill, his horse was grazing quietly, as if nothing had happened.

An old and withered elm, with scarcely a leaf, but a sprout of one of those which lined the way, still remain in the middle of the street to mark the site of this catastrophe.

Slowly the moon rose above the Calton; the long shadow of the hill grew less and less as the orb soared up, until its beams fell on the white visage of the murdered man, and on his polished armour. A black pool lay near, and mingled with the dry summer dust.

The horse with its bridle trailing was still grazing placidly at a little distance.

Some crows were beginning to perch on the elms, or flying round the body with screaming beaks and flapping wings.

... They came from an adjacent gallows on the Lea.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TEMPTATION.

“ Oh! Harpalus (thus would he say)

Unhappiest under sunne;

The cause of thine unhappy day,

By love was first begunne;

As easy 'twere for to convert

The frost into a flame,

As for to turn a froward heart,

Whom thou so fain wouldst frame.”

Reliq. of English Poetry, 1557.

THE clock struck in the steeple of St. Giles. Jane heard it distinctly in her prison. Each note was wafted towards her as with a solemn note of lamentation, from the vast and broad mouth of the great church bell. Every stroke vibrated painfully through her heart.

It tolled *eleven!*

She had but one hour to live. One hour! and then——

A loud and palpable murmur, as of many thousand voices, arose in the city; her heart for a moment died within her, she covered her face with her hand, and burst out into a passionate prayer to Heaven—for she knew that, encompassed as she was by sorrow and

despair, and engirdled by that strong tower, the eyes of God were upon her.

The broad flame of a torch, which was stuck in a tin sconce that hung upon the wall, cast a livid glare on the bare masonry of the vaulted chamber, on her kneeling figure, on her dark and disordered hair, on her white hands, and her whiter forehead.

"Roland, my Roland! thou believest these things of me? Oh, I could never have believed such of thee!"

A shudder passed over her, and it seemed as if her heart would burst. She had received a reply to that paper so cunningly devised by Redhall, the letter signed and addressed to Roland, when suffering under the agony of an artificial thirst; and that answer, which showed that *he* believed in her guilt, as confessed to him under her own hand, had crushed her spirit more than all the tortures, inflictions, and insults, she had so unmeritedly undergone.

Signed by Roland, but written generally to his dictation by the chaplain of the fortress, an old Dominican friar, the reply was sad and sorrowful, full of regrets for her sore temptation to evil; her bitter humiliation, blended with expressions of satisfaction at her contrition; and closing with a pious hope that the sincerity of her repentance and the severity of her earthly punishments would save her from those of another life, solemnly committed her and her works to Heaven.

This unlover-like epistle, the embodying of which poor Roland, in his sorrow and confusion of mind, had left entirely to the ingenuity of the friar, appeared to Jane Seton the crowning stroke of her misfortunes. It left her nothing more to wish for, to hope for, or to bind her to the earth. Her Roland had cast her off!

For the thousandth time she drew forth the letter

and gazed upon the name his hand had traced; now the paper was sorely worn and fretted by her tears. She read it over for the last time, sighed bitterly, and placed it in her bosom.

"It shall go with me to—death," she said, for, with a shudder, she reflected that by the mode of that death *even a grave* was denied her; and there was something frightful in the idea that a week, a month, or a year hence, no one could point to a stone slab or a mound of earth, and say that she whom they remembered, or loved, or regretted, lay below—for the ashes of a witch were scattered to the four winds of heaven.

"Oh, my Roland, thou hast abandoned me! but God will not abandon me!"

"Look up, Lady Jane," said a mild voice.

She raised her eyes suddenly, but without surprise or terror, for neither of these emotions could affect her now; absorbed in her own thoughts, she had not heard any one enter.

The stately figure of Redhall stood before her. He wore a court dress of black velvet, with a white cross on his mantle, as mourning for the queen. His close clipped beard and black moustache were trimmed with their usual care, but he seemed the shadow of what he was. His grave and noble features were pale as death, and, like her own, were attenuated to excess, but by mental rather than bodily suffering (though he had endured both), and their pallor contrasted strongly with his large, dark eyes, which were so full of light, and yet were so expressive of sorrow. Every part of his dress was black, save the shoulder-belt or scarf that sustained his silver-hilted sword, and which, like the band of his bonnet, glittered with silver embroidery and precious stones, that ever changing in the light of the torch, sparkled with

a thousand prismatic hues. He held his bonnet respectfully in his left hand, and its long black feather drooped on the floor.

"Look up, Lady Jane," he repeated; and Jane arose, with horror and aversion expressed in every feature of her face.

"You have dared to come hither? Is it to gloat upon the sorrow you have made—the poor being you have devoted to destruction—a being who never harmed you? Oh, Redhall! Redhall! what a plot of hell thy plot has been!"

"Dost thou think me cruel?"

"Cruel?" reiterated Jane; "didst thou say *cruel*?"

"Hear me, hear me! for there is but little time, as in an hour thou art to die."

"St. Giles's bell has told me that. Begone, begone! wretch, thou horror and abomination! Leave me to prayer, I implore thee! to prepare for that death thy guilt, and not mine own, deserves."

"Lady, if I am guilty, love hath made me so."

"Love!"

"Turned to hatred by vengeance and despair! Thou didst permit me to love thee, and then destroyed the dear hopes which that permission excited. Then I hated thee and loved thee by turns; but hatred became the strongest, and I swore that never should another man wed thee. Taunted, I longed for vengeance, but on thy lover rather than on thee—yea, even as the thirsty long for water, and thou art here! It was my destiny, perhaps, to accomplish thy death, and if so, my doom and thine must be fulfilled. Thy death! and yet—yet I could love thee, even after all that hath passed—even loathing life as I do. To the storm of passions which so lately agitated me, a horrid calm has succeeded, and

I can look back to the events of the last few weeks as one saved from shipwreck might do to the boiling ocean he has escaped. Thou lookest on me with horror; yet knowest thou not, Jane, that God put much of human kindness in my heart, and, until I met thee, knew thee, and most fatally loved thee, I was good and gentle, save when men wronged or thwarted me. My capacities for love and hatred have but two extremes. Thee, I could have loved for ever! Thy beauty is like that of the rose, or of the lily, born to wither, to lose form and perfume; but my love would have endured unto death, and would have passed away but with life alone. Taunted and repulsed by thee, mocked by my friends as thy play-thing, vanquished by a mischance in combat with Vipont, who can wonder that the poison of hatred entered my heart? that it rankled there, and grew strong, distorting every object to my mind and eye? Life lost the few pleasures it possessed. I thought of nothing but destruction, and felt that I was predestined to accomplish thy death, for I felt (he added, in the very words of the Jew) that if it would feed nothing else, it would feed my revenge—that revenge for which I lived alone! Oh, Jane, this is all the truth, the sad, the solemn truth. Is it not frightful to think that in less than one hour thou wilt have to die?"

"The victim of a madman—a fatalist! Just Heaven, will this be permitted?"

"Heaven has left you yet one chance of life," said Redhall, as his eyes lighted up with a wild gleam, and drawing from his bosom the pardon, which had cost the gallant Leslie so dear, the pardon which was spotted with his blood, and which bore the royal signature, *James Rex*, and a seal, the well known private signet of the king, he held it before her startled eyes. "Be

silent, and listen. Your life and death are in my hands. This is a free pardon from the king, granted yesterday at Falkland. Save thyself, not one in Edinburgh knows of its existence, and, without it, you die in half an hour. Oh, ponder well on this," he added, with eyes that eloquently expressed his sorrow, triumph, eagerness, and fear, as, with one hand he grasped her, and held it before her with the other, but at arm's-length, lest she might snatch it from him. "Swear before Heaven, the Mother of all compassion, before the Apostle John and all the saints, to accept me as thy husband; to banish Vipont from thy mind for evermore, even as he has banished thee from his, and into thy hands I commit this paper, and thou art saved. Reject me, I consume it at this torch, and thou art lost!"

He held the paper within an inch of the flaring torch.

"Sir Adam Otterburn," replied Jane, firmly, and with dignity; "I have nothing now to lose but a life that thou hast made hateful to myself, and abominable in the sight of Scotland—a name thou hast covered with such shame that even he who loved me most abhors it now. Thee! the wife of thee, thou murderer and assassin of the gallant Bombie!—thou destroyer of my honour, and the honour of my family! Oh no, welcome, a thousand times more welcome are the grave, the gallows, the stake—death under any form, than an alliance so detested. Out upon thee, coward, demon, and tempter!" and in the wildness of her scorn and hatred, she smote him on the mouth with her clenched hand.

"Then be it so!" replied Redhall, with a horrible laugh, as an emotion of rage rose within him. "Thou

shalt die as one accursed by God and man, with the flames around thee, and the yells of an assembled city in thine ears, as the meed of thy unmerited scorn. Proud and unrelenting woman, unshriven and unabsolved, even by the fantastic rites of a church that is falling, thou shalt die, with the bitter conviction that all thy sorrow, and all thy tears, and all thy pain are futile, as the wings of the demon are over thee."

And with these terrible words he thrust the pardon into the large flame of the torch, which consumed it in a moment.

Jane uttered a wild cry as he did so; for an instant the love of life had dawned strongly in her bosom.

Again she sank on her knees in despair, and covered her face with her hands; when she looked up, Redhall was gone. He had departed so silently, that she might have deemed the whole interview a vision, but for the ashes of the pardon which were floating about her.

One small fragment, which the flame had left undevoured, lay on the floor; but there was a fiery circle within it—a circle that spread and reddened—spread—spread, until it reached the edge, where it died away in blackness, even as her momentary hope had died.

At that instant she heard footsteps approaching her chamber door, and there was the knell of death in their echoes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LOCH.

“ And quickly Walter seeks once more,
With eager steps the ocean’s shore ;
And lingers on impatient there,
The appointed hour—now do and dare !
He eyed the high and rugged steep
Which overhung the foaming deep.”

The Convent of Algarve.

To avoid the vast crowds that were assembling on the Castle-hill, and before the Port of the Spur, Redhall left the fortress by the postern gate ; and though the descent from thence to the foot of the cliffs on the west was steep and extremely dangerous, even in daylight, he plunged down from rock to rock, grasping the hazel-bushes and wild willows in his progress, until he reached the old and narrow horsepath which led from the King’s Meuse and the tilting-ground towards the venerable kirk of St. Cuthbert the Bishop.

Breathless and exhausted by the rapidity of his descent down these pathless and precipitate rocks, and overcome by the load of agony that pressed upon his heart, he sank upon the turf, and lay there for a few minutes motionless.

Above him, the fortress and its stupendous rocks

towered away into the obscurity of the midnight sky; before him, spread the ripening corn-fields, divided by thick hedgerows; and in the hollow on his left lay the kirk of St. Cuthbert, with the dim lights twinkling in its aisles, and shedding through its Gothic windows an uncertain radiance on the adjacent water; for it had then two minor altars, the great lamps before which were never extinguished until 1559. The sky was starless, and the moon had gone down enveloped in clouds. The great square tower of the church, a monastic relic of the eighth century, built by the Culdees of Lothian, stood boldly, in black outline, against the dark gauzy vapour that shrouded the north; a rising wind moaned through the marshy hollow, shaking the old woods which overshadowed the Kirkbraehead, and rippling the waters of the loch, which almost washed the castle rock.

There was a voice of reproach in that midnight wind; and from the passing clouds many a grim face seemed to peer upon the unhappy wretch, who, at the foot of the rocks, lay below the postern, listening to the fierce beating of his tortured heart.

And save its beating, and the moaning wind, all seemed deathly still around him. The gueldre roses and the wild violets filled the air with perfume, though the dew of midnight rested on their leaves.

The appearance of Jane, the expression of her eyes, and the familiar sound of her voice, had recalled his first passion in all its strength; and before it, for a time, revenge melted away like summer mist. He contemplated himself with horror; but *now*, to save her, would be to cover his own name with disgrace and contumely; and to avow his master-villany and deep-laid vengeance, though it might snatch Jane from the

jaws of death, would but restore her to the arms of Vipont, and afford that hated rival a triumph which could not be contemplated with calmness. The agony, the repentance, the fear, the shame, the abhorrence of himself, and the chaos of his mind, were frightful.

A flame shot across the sky.

It was but the sheet lightning of summer flashing redly behind the afar off hills, and showing the dark woods of Coats, and of the Dean that waved between.

For a moment it illuminated the dark hollow where this repentant sinner lay, and gave him a startling shock; for he thought of the funeral pyre that was soon to blaze before the gates of the fortress which overhung him.

"Jane, oh, Jane!" he cried, incoherently and aloud; "oh, thou whom I could have worshipped with the adoration of an idolater, but whom I have destroyed with the blind fury of a fiend! Can I not save thee without burying myself under a mountain of disgrace, as well as of misery? And for this paltry tremor thou art left to die! thou, so beautiful, so innocent, so pure in spirit and so single in heart! The icy sweat is again on my brow, the iron in my heart—for all thine image is before me, as it was once, so full of smiles and pride, of bloom and high-born loveliness, as on that night at Holyrood. . . . Thy voice is ever in my ear, thy name on my lip! . . . Oh, misery! oh, for one hour of oblivion! . . ."

He sprang up, and slowly descending the narrow path by the base of the castle rock, below St. Margaret's Tower, approached the loch, but without any defined object. The stillness of its dark and almost waveless water had something in it that attracted him involuntarily towards it.

The loch was then full and the water deep.

"Coward that I am," he thought, "one bold plunge and all would be over."

The temptation was a strong one: there was a rushing in his ears, a whirling in his brain, and a fearful palsy in his heart, which seemed to stand for a moment still; he looked around him hurriedly, and no one seemed near.

But a single star was visible, like a watching eye, and its rays were reflected in the motionless water under the solemn shadow of the impending rocks.

At such a moment the human mind is like a bullet which a hair may turn aside.

He took one step backward, and was about to make the desperate leap, when the sound of voices and footsteps arrested him; and, like one surprised in a guilty action, he shrunk behind a clump of wild hazel bushes, and thus was saved from the committal of another heavy crime.

Two men, whom he had not before observed, now appeared on the narrow pathway below. One was mounted, clad in half armour, and by the ostrich feather which waved in his bonnet, appeared to be a gentleman; the other was on foot, and led a horse by the bridle.

Redhall heard the name of *Vipont*.

It called up all his evil passions and bitter memories. It restored him to life and energy of purpose. He put his hand on the hilt of his sword, and listening, approached them stealthily.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAW OF THE SWORD.

“Dost thou, O traitor! thus to grace pretend,
Clad as thou art in trophies of my friend?
To his sad soul, a grateful offering go!
'Tis Pallas, Pallas gives this deadly blow.
He raised his arm aloft, and, at the word,
Deep in his bosom drove the shining sword.
The streaming blood distained his arms around,
And the disdainful soul came rushing through the wound.”
Æneid, XII.

ACCORDING to the tenour of his last conversation with his unfortunate lieutenant, when they supped at the *Cross and Gillstoup*, Sir John Forrester had not forgotten the safety of their mutual friend, Vipont; and being well aware that the hostility of the king's advocate had no boundary but death, while the cruel assassination of Leslie, the scarcely less cruel visit of Red-hall to Jane, and the destruction of the pardon in David's Tower, were taking place, he had prepared everything for the escape of Roland from the fortress in which he was confined.

Aware that the attention of the city without, and of the garrison within the castle, of the governor, of the provost, and all the authorities, was wholly occupied by

the preparations for the execution of the first sorceress to be burned in Scotland, this gallant gentleman wisely considered the hour of midnight as the most fitting time to achieve the liberty of his friend.

Aware that our agile acquaintance, Master Sabrino, could climb like a squirrel, he had been employed by Forrester as the principal agent in the adventure.

From the fields on the opposite bank of the loch Sabrino had been shown the tower and the window of the apartment wherein Roland Vipont was confined, and to that window, at nightfall, the active negro had clambered with wondrous bravery and skill; and had introduced to the tower a pair of saws formed of the sharpest steel, and a strong cord, of great length, knotted with loops for the hands and feet, by which he was to descend some twenty yards of the most dangerous part of the rocks; while Sabrino, who could cling to their perpendicular front as a fly does to the wall, was to descend without other aid than his own black paws and tenacious feet.

At the very time that Redhall approached, and in the two figures recognised the captain of the king's guard, and the old servant of Roland Vipont, the latter had just removed (by the aid of his saws) the last bar from the window, and trembling with eagerness, was preparing to descend the rope ladder which Sabrino, with a broad grin on his vast mouth and in his shining eyes, fastened to the remaining stumps of the stanchells.

Who the kind person might be that had furnished and sent the bold page with these means of escape, Roland had no means of ascertaining; for, being tongueless, poor Sabrino was mute as a fish; and of all his

innumerable signs and nods, winks and unearthly chuckles, the master of the ordnance could make nothing.

A plain wooden prie-Dieu formed part of the furniture of his apartment. On his knees Roland Vipont sank into it, and on a lock of Jane's hair fixed a long, a passionate, and indescribable gaze of love and sorrow, and then uttered a brief, emphatic prayer.

"Innocent or guilty, I will see her once again, or die in the attempt," said he, placing the ringlet in his bosom, and preparing to descend.

The passage of the window was easily accomplished; and reaching the base of the tower, he found himself upon a narrow ledge of rock; the chill wind rushed up past him, and voices were faintly borne with it from below. There, the cliff on which King David's Tower was built is somewhat impending, and from the broad battlements a plumb-line might, without meeting an obstacle, be dropped to the depth of nearly two hundred and fifty feet, to the pathway on which Sir John Forrester and Lintstock stood on that night. If dropped one yard beyond the rock, it would have fallen into the waters of the lake.

Roland's heart expanded in his breast; for to his active spirit, which had writhed in captivity, there was almost a relief in the new energy of action.

He descended with equal rapidity and boldness, for he was utterly regardless of life, and this very carelessness was perhaps his salvation, by affording him the means of achieving that in which the timid or the wary man would inevitably have failed. The wild wallflower, the strong docken blades, the long grass, the longer and more tenacious ivy which grew in the clefts of the rocks, or overhung their lichen-spotted brows, afforded

him the means of descent after he had passed the bottom of the cord.

In the darkness and obscurity of the night, he could not have been seen even from the windows of Wallace's Tower or the Constable's Tower, but now their inmates had all deserted them; for the entire population of the Castle were crowding on the battlements of the great peel, the eastern curtain, and the spur, which overlooked the place of execution, the preparations for which were being made on the south side of the Castle-hill.

He had one risk of discovery alone; for, not eighty yards from where Forrester awaited him, the pathway was crossed and defended by the Well House Tower.

Those of our readers who may have perused our "Memorials" of the ancient fortress, may remember how frequently we had occasion to mention this now ruined ravelin.

Built over a fountain, the waters of which fed the loch, this strong square tower rose within six feet of the enormous perpendicular cliff sustaining David's Tower. A massive wall, having an archway with an iron gate and loopholes for arrows and musketry, secured the narrow path which led to St. Cuthbert's church on one hand, and ascended the Castle-hill on the other, passing between the tower and the rock. The guard here had the treble duty of protecting the well, the private roadway, and the city wall of A.D. 1450, which enclosed the Castle-hill at its northern base. The tower was entered from the inside of this flanking wall by two doors, which, by a stair partly hewn in the rocks, led to the first and second floors. The upper was at that time always occupied by a party of arquebusiers, and the light of their guard-fire streamed redly through

two narrow grated windows upon the still dark bosom of the loch, which washed the north wall, and rolled away in obscurity towards the east end of the city.

Then the wide ravine that yawned between the southern hill of the Modern Athens and the giant ridge of Auld Reikie, her *mither-toun*, was an impassable gulf. Now the waters have disappeared, but the tide of life ebbs and flows in their place. A stupendous mound and a lordly bridge now cross that hollow glen where the fountain welled which David, "by consent of his earls and bishops," gifted to God and the Holy Cross, and where the queen of Robert III. held her brilliant tournaments; and now, the red gleam of the furnace, the hiss of the steam-engine, the clink of hammers, the hum of voices, and the roar of the railway train, rise up from its depth to scare the woodcock, the snipe, and the wild coot, who come as of old to seek the bed where for ages the water lay.

Once only did Roland pause in his perilous descent, to assure himself that he was not seen. Dislodged by his foot, a stone gave way, and as it bounded from the rocks he heard it plash into the loch, far, far down below. There, by its margin, stood Forrester and Lintstock listening intently, and glancing silently at each other from time to time; for, brave and adventurous though the age might be, there were bounds, even in warlike Scotland, to hardihood and adventure.

"If he should be afraid to descend!" said Sir John.

"Afraid?" retorted Lintstock; "I have kent him, Sir John Forrester, since he was a bairn that couldna' blaw his ain nose, and never saw fear in his face yet.—There he comes," added the old cannoneer, as the stone we have just mentioned rolled over their heads

and fell into the calm loch, forming a hundred circles on its dark bosom; "there he comes—there he comes!" continued the veteran, whose solitary eye moistened with a tear as he uttered a fervent supplication to "Sancta Barbara, the virgin and martyr, patroness of all bold cannoneers and artillery" (according to the military superstition of the age), to protect his master.

In a few minutes more, both Roland and Sabrino were seen descending the dangerous path. Lintstock uttered a cry of satisfaction.

"Courage!" said Forrester, placing his hand at the side of his mouth, lest the guard at the tower might overhear, and fire on them.

In another moment, Roland, breathless with his exertions, was beside them, and in the arms of his old servant, who swore and wept with joy.

His hair and beard were so disordered, that Forrester could scarcely recognise him.

"My dear friend," said Roland, sadly, "if the thanks of one to whom life is valueless are worth accepting, take them from me a thousand times, and a thousand more. Believe me, I am almost mad—I know not what I do, or what I say, or whether my words are incoherent as my thoughts."

He was frightfully pale and haggard.

"Truly, Vipont, we live in strange times—times that future men will talk of with wonder, for we participate in deeds of which our posterity will scarcely believe," replied Forrester, gravely; "but I pray you, mount and begone, for we have not a moment to lose! Instant flight ——"

"Horses and arms! by what magic hast thou divined my secret thought? Oh, my good, my kind Forrester, it is so like thee!"

"Here is your own sword—the old Italian blade you loved so well."

"I am glad thou'st brought it, for 'tis all my heritage," replied Roland, as he buckled it on, and then unsheathed the blade and waved it in the air.

"My castle in the west is at your service. Mount and ride, I implore you, Vipont; for every moment of delay is fraught with danger to us all!"

"Mount and ride, say you? Yes; but not to your castle in the west, my dear friend—no! I have sworn to see Jane Seton once again before she dies. Jane! Jane! that letter—ah! why didst thou send it, for I would rather thou hadst stabbed me with a poniard? My good sword! how great, how glorious a thing it is to be free, and to feel thee in my hand. Now can I deal death for death, blow for blow, and blood for blood! Oh, Forrester, I feel that wrong and oppression have made me a very savage."

To crush his agony, he bit his lips till the blood came, and hastily, but scrupulously examined the bridle and stirrups of the horse his friend had brought him.

Breathlessly, and with a heart full of rage, Redhall from his place of concealment had seen and overheard them.

"I have destroyed her, and shall *he* escape me?" he thought. "No, by the Power of heaven!" and drawing his sword, he made stealthily towards the Well House-Tower, for there was no time to give an alarm elsewhere. Thrice he assayed to gain it, but in vain; for those he wished to intercept stood right in the narrow path leading to the gateway which the tower flanked; the cliff rose up on one side like a wall, the deep water descended into darkness on the other.

"Haloo! we are watched!" cried old Lintstock,

whose single eye was worth a dozen of others, and had seen this dark figure which glided near them in the gloom.

Full of rage and shame at being discovered, Redhall, who was too proud and too brave to retreat, advanced boldly, with his sword in his hand, exclaiming loudly—

“A rescue! a rescue! a rescue and escape! Ho, the guard! ho, in the name of the king! treason! and breaking ward! treason! treason!”

“*Redhall!*” cried Roland in a choaking voice.

“We are lost!” said Forrester.

Roland could utter no more; he thought that destiny had delivered his enemy over to his vengeance; and a wild tempest of holy fervour and infernal fury filled his heart. He rushed upon him like a lion, and they both engaged with blind desperation.

Their eyes were full of fire, their breasts burning with as much hatred as could possibly animate two human hearts, and much more intent on slaying each other than on protecting themselves, they hewed and thrust, cutting showers of sparks from their swords in the dark, while their blades rang like bells. They seemed to be transformed into demons by their mortal hatred.

Resolved that even if himself should be slain his enemy should not escape, Redhall called incessantly to the guard in the adjacent tower; and Sir John Forrester, with alarm, heard the voices of the soldiers, who were part of his own corps of guards, and saw the glow of their lighted matches reddening behind the loopholes, and through the bars of the gate, as they prepared “to make service” against those who were brawling on St. Cuthbert’s roadway; in other words, to fire on them.

Before this measure took place the combat was decided.

Stepping back a pace, and grasping his sword with both hands, Redhall raised the hilt above his head, and dropping the blade behind him, resolved to give a cut-down stroke, which would end the conflict and his rival's life together; but Roland, quick as lightning, on seeing his whole body unprotected, sprang forward, and ran more than two feet of his long doubled-edged sword through his body.

A groan of rage and agony escaped from Redhall; with his left hand he grasped Roland's sword near the hilt, and fiercely writhed his body forward upon it, to shorten the distance between himself and his antagonist, in whose heart he endeavoured to bury a poniard which he grasped in his right hand, and for which he had relinquished his sword.

But seeing his deadly intention, Roland spurned him with his right foot; he staggered backward, the blood gushed forth, and at the same moment he rolled over the narrow path, and falling off the blade of the sword, sank heavily into the dark water of the loch, thus being stabbed and drowned almost at the same moment.

Roland uttered a wild laugh, leaped on horseback, and galloped madly away by the base of the castle-rock.

Forrester followed at full speed, but the frantic horseman had disappeared like a spirit round the western side of the rock, and even the sound of his horse's hoofs had died away.

At that instant a volley of six arquebuses flashed redly from the parapets of the ravelin, and their bullets whistled about the ears of old Lintstock, who immediately scrambled after Sir John Forrester; but one pierced the brain of the poor page Sabrina, who fell dead on the spot.

The discovery of his body next morning caused unusual consternation in the "good town" of Edinburgh, and the expenditure of several gallons of holy water, which were sprinkled upon the livid corse and the place where it lay; while the tidings went far and wide that "my Lady of Ashkirk's devil had been found under the castle rock."

*

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PLACE OF DOOM.

“But when the appointed day was come,
No help appeared nye;
Then woeful, woeful was her heart,
And tears stood in her eye.
And now a fyer was built of wood,
And a stake was made of tree;
And now Queen Elinor forth was led,
A sorrowful sight to see.”

Sir Aldringar, an old Ballad.

ON this night a strange sound floated upward to the Castle of Edinburgh from the city below; it was like the murmur of distant waves, or of the rising wind shaking the branches of a forest. This was occasioned by the crowding of the people towards the *place of doom*, as it was graphically named.

It was a dark midnight, moonless and starless; the eyes of thousands were raised inquisitively to the black, opaque mass of the castle rock, and the zone of lofty towers which then engirdled its summit, with their embasured battlements and frowning cannon.

Culprits usually suffered at a place on the south side of the Castle-hill, where a green bank of several hundred yards sloped steeply downward from the ramparts

of the Spur, to the north ends of the closes in the Grass Market, a broad arena which, from its fantastic architecture, has been said closely to resemble the Plaza of a Spanish or Italian town, and which lies in a valley to the south of the Castle.

The wall of the city, which descended at an angle of nearly fifty degrees from the rock on which the fortress is built until it intersected the streets beneath at the King's Meuse, closed this sloping bank on the west. The back of a narrow close, which was demolished in the civil war of 1745, enclosed it on the east, and the Spur, with its strong rampart and twenty pieces of brass cannon, overlooked it on the north. There were then no Castle Terrace or Western Approach to disfigure the city on the south, and this green and verdant bank descended smoothly and gradually downwards to the great market-place.

The stake was placed on a small natural platform a few yards square, the same place where Thomas Forrest, vicar of Dollar, John Keillior, and John Beverage, two Dominican priests, Duncan Simpson, and Sir Robert Forrest, a gentleman of Stirlingshire, were burned for heresy in presence of the regal court, on the night of the 2nd of March, two years after the events we are about to relate. This was the place of death until the year 1681, when the Scottish government deprived the city of it for military purposes.

The stake was a strong column of oak, roughly dressed by a hatchet, and had rivetted upon it the *branks*, or witch's bridle, which hung at the end of a short chain. This instrument, which was considered so necessary in punishments by fire, and which was soon to become so famous in Scotland, that every burgh required one, was a circle of iron, formed of four parts,

connected by steel hinges, and adapted to encircle the neck, like the modern *jougs*, which may sometimes be seen at kirk-doors. The chain was behind; in front was the broad gag which entered the mouth, and pressed down the tongue to prevent the unhappy wretch, whose head was locked within it, crying aloud; and after the execution, this diabolical invention, which was usually found among the ashes of the fire and of the skeleton, with fragments of bones and teeth adhering to it, was carefully preserved by the thrifty baillies in the council chamber until the next "worrying," as it was termed.

Several horseloads of faggots, nicely split, and tied up in bundles, were piled three feet deep around the stake by the concurrents, or assistants of Sanders Screw, in absence of Dobbie, whom a blow from Leslie's sword had left half dead at a cottage near Inverteil; and on these bundles they poured several buckets of tar and oil, thereafter sprinkling the whole with gunpowder and sulphur. These operations soothed the excitement and impatience of the expectant thousands, who long before the fatal hour had taken possession of the whole ground about the stake, a circle round which was kept open by the halberts of the provost, while beyond there were a party of fifty mounted spearmen under his kinsman, Sir Andrew Preston of Gourtown, who was sheathed in complete armour. Every second trooper bore a lighted torch; thus the mob could see with ease, and be seen.

In addition to the inhabitants of the city, nearly all those of the four municipalities, or burghs of regality, which lay without the barriers,—viz., the Portsburgh, lying before the West-port; the Canongate, without the Netherbow-port; the Potter-row, which lay before the Kirk-of-field-port; and the Calton, lying without St.

Andrew's-port, or the Craig-end-gate, were collected in the spacious area of the Grassmarket, and on the steep face of the castle bank. The walls of the ravelin which crowned it, on the north, the bartizans, roofs, windows, even the chimney heads and pediments, every ledge and part of the houses on the west, and the ends of those which closed the ground below, were crowded with spectators. The market-place was like a sea of up-turned faces, all visible in the torchlight, though far down below; and the hum of their myriad voices, mingled with many a shrill cry, or threat, the clink of steel, or clatter of iron hoofs, as the armed horsemen rode to and fro keeping order among them, ascended the side of the hill, and echoed among the rocks and towers of the fortress, where the poor victim for whom they waited was kneeling at her prayers.

So great was the crowd in the market, that even the bartizans of the Greyfriars' monastery, a large building which formed part of the street, and had been built by James I., about a hundred years before, for Cornelius of Zurich and certain canons of Cologne, together with the loftier houses of the Knights of Torphichen, in the Bow, though still more distant, were covered with spectators.

Clad in thin grey cassocks girt with knotted cords, the Greyfriars ran about among the people, barefooted, and carrying little wooden boxes to receive money from the charitable and religious to pay for "masses and prayers for the soul of the poor lost heretic and sorceress,"—prayers and masses for the poor girl who was yet living. Solemn mass, as for the dead, was to have been said in the chapel of St. Margaret, the queen of Scotland, by Father St. Bernard, and the chaplain of the fortress; but the baillies, the portly deacons of the

crafts and consequential councillors of the gude town, were impatient for the *deid chack*, and had ordered, that as the friars had lingered too long with Jane in her cell, and as the hour of twelve approached, and the people were impatient, they should do their office at the stake ; an edict of selfishness and cruelty.

This *deid chack* was a dinner or supper (according to the hour) of which the magistrates always partook after an execution ; and it was generally served up with great civic state, in a chamber which adjoined the church of St. Giles, and which in later days was the vestry of the Tolbooth kirk.

Twelve rang from the great tower of that venerable fane ; and to the ears of all it seemed to do so more slowly and solemnly than usual, for such is the force of imagination. At the same moment the lurid flash of a culverin broke redly from the battlements of the Constable's Tower, and its hoarse boom pealed away over the heads of the people.

Every heart leaped, every ear tingled, every eye dilated. A rapid murmur pervaded the vast multitude, and then died away, leaving them all attention—all ear and eye ; they seemed to have but one pulse, one heart, and their expectations were excited to the utmost degree when the strong iron portal of the Spur unclosed, and the procession of death appeared slowly descending the steep bank towards the stake.

First came six arquebusiers in steel caps and crimson doublets, marching in double file, with their matches smoking.

Then came Sanders Screw, dressed in flaming scarlet, with a leather apron, and his arms bared to the elbow. He bore a lighted torch, which flared luridly on his

withered visage and decrepit figure. He looked like an antiquated fiend.

Then came the governor of the fortress, Sir James Riddel, walking on foot, but in half armour, attended by an esquire and two pages,—one bearing his sword, the other his helmet. With him were the magistrates in their scarlet gowns, wearing their chains of gold, with their sword-bearer, macer, and halberdiers, clad in blue doublets, laced, and slashed with yellow.

Then appeared Father St. Bernard, with the Dominican who acted as the governor's chaplain. Both were walking bareheaded and in full canonicals, with their eyes fixed upon their books. St. Bernard was praying, the Dominican made the responses in a loud and audible voice. All the people immediately uncovered their heads, and the horsemen of Gourtown lowered the points of their lances.

When Lady Jane appeared, another low murmur pervaded the people, mingled with exclamations of—

“Alake! alake! oh waly! waly! Eh, sirs, and gude preserve us! waly! waly!” for the latter is an old Scottish exclamation expressive of the utmost commiseration.

It rose almost to a shout, then it died away, and silence sealed the lips of nearly ten thousand persons; they seemed for a time to be frozen with pity, horror, and expectation of the dire catastrophe; and so they remained with their countless eyes fixed upon her, their mouths open, their voices hushed, their breathing suspended.

Poor Jane! amid all that living sea, around, above, and below her, she saw not the face of a friend, and yet the heads were rising and falling like the billows of

a heaving ocean, as the hushed people, animated by morbid curiosity, struggled in silence to obtain a full view of her.

The lines of Nicholas Rowe are strikingly descriptive of her aspect ; for as she descended to the pile—

“ Submissive, sad, and lowly was her look ;
A burning taper in her hand she bore,
And on her shoulders carelessly confused
With loose neglect her lovely tresses hung ;
Upon her cheek a faintish flush was spread ;
Feeble she seemed, and sorely smit with pain.
Her streaming eye bent ever on the earth,
Except when in some bitter pang of sorrow,
To heaven she seemed in fervent zeal to raise,
And begged that mercy man denied her here.”

Instead of being dressed in a penitent's frock of tarred canvas, painted with flames pointing downwards, like those of the “heretics” whom the same spectators had seen burned at the Rood of Greenside, before the gate of the Carmelites, a short time before, Jane wore an ordinary tunic of blue silk ; and her little velvet cap, with its triangular front, from the top of which a pendant bob-jewel sparkled on her brow,—for she had resolved to die bravely. Her rosary, formed of silver and coral beads, hung at her wrist ; her missal was in one hand, a taper in the other. Her luxuriant brown hair hung over her shoulders, in sign of sorrow and repentance ; she was sorely changed, and worn almost to a skeleton, but there was something almost holy in the solemn and resigned expression of her beautiful face. It was the pallor of long mental suffering, mingled with a sublime resignation to the will of God and the hard fate He designed for her at the hands of His creatures, who seemed to her so merciless.

Now hovering between time and eternity, she seemed as one beyond the pale of life.

The fear and hatred which her name, as a rumoured sorceress, had excited in the minds of the people, died away when they beheld her. Sorrow and compassion swelled in every heart, and each man whispered to his neighbour of her youth and beauty, and the memory of that good and valiant earl her father, "who fought so well for Scotland, God rest him!"

Many wrung their hands, many wept, and more prayed for her; for if they were blunt and fiery, our Scottish sires of the olden time, and somewhat too ready with the use of their swords and dirks, they were warm-hearted and kind, as they were honest and true.

Her dignity and courage deserved their praise, for, on beholding those assembled thousands, the glittering pikes of the the mailed horsemen, the halberts and arquebuses, the stake with its chain, and the oiled faggots which formed that appalling pile, Jane gathered courage from her pride of birth and name, and resolved that history should never have it to record that a daughter of the house of Ashkirk blanched in the face of death—that grim foe, whom its sons had so often confronted on the fields of France and England. As these thoughts fired her heart, her cheek flushed, her dark eye lighted up, she became in a moment sublime; and as the bright torches glared on her wasted and ghastly beauty, the people saw in her no longer the regicide and the sorceress, but a heroine, a martyr!

Now she knelt down by the pile, for Father St. Bernard, in a low voice, almost inaudibly tremulous, began to repeat the prayers contained in the mass usually performed for the dead on the day of decease or burial; for as an "obdurate heretic and sorceress,"

Jane was not permitted to receive the last sacraments of her church in public, but the good old prebendary had bestowed them in secret.

Then, as this solemn service commenced, the entire assembled thousands sank upon their knees, and bowed down their heads. Even the Reformers who were in the crowd (and there were many), could not refuse to kneel and pray, at a crisis so sad and terrible, when a poor human soul was, as they thought, hovering on the brink of hell.

The horsemen of Gourtown remained upright in their saddles, with their armour gleaming in the torchlight, which shed its uncertain glare upon the crowded bank, and on the giant fortress that towered into the clouds above it, upon the bastions and cannon of the Spur, upon the crowded windows and fantastic architecture of the closes, and the sea of heads that were bowed in the market-place, far down below, upon the kneeling sufferer, the silver hair, bald heads, and shining vestments of the priests beside her; while like the murmur of a gentle wind, as it passes over a full-eared corn-field, the voices of the people rose, when they joined in the beautiful hymn prescribed by what was then their church,—

“The day of wrath! that dreadful day!
Shall the whole world in ashes lay,
As David and the sybils say.
What horror shall invade the mind,
When the strict Judge, who would be kind,
Shall have few venial faults to find!”

and so on to the close of the solemn chaunt,—

“Prostrate my contrite heart I rend,
Do not forsake me in mine end!”

Well may they curse their second breath,
Who rise to everlasting death!
Thou great Creator of mankind,
Oh, let *this soul* compassion find!"

Amid all that vast assemblage, there was one person who did not seem to join in this hymn. He had lost his bonnet; his head was bare, and his hair, wild, matted, and disordered, waved around his head, and mingled with a beard, that seemed to have been untrimmed for a fortnight. He was armed with a long sword, and rode a powerful horse, the blood of which was dripping from a pair of sharp spurs, which appeared to be hurriedly buckled on. The whole multitude were intently regarding the poor being who was about to suffer, otherwise the pale visage, fierce eyes, and wild aspect of this strange horseman, must have attracted, in a marked manner, the attention of all who chanced to observe him.

He was Roland Vipont, who, with a heart full of fury, and a head full of desperate thoughts, had posted himself as near the pile as the spearmen of Sir Andrew Preston would permit.

Love and wrath, together with wounded pride, had excited his great inborn courage to a point of rashness and bravery that made him feel strong as a Hercules, bold as a lion, and fitted to encounter, without a shadow of fear or qualm of doubt, Sir Andrew of Gourtoun's fifty lances in a general mêlée.

Slowly and impressively, the chapel bells of the Greyfriars, and of St. Mary in the Portsburgh began to toll a knell for the passing soul, and the heads of the people bent lower.

"Blessed Lord," Roland heard the voice of the

prebend praying ; " oh, King of Glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the flames of hell, and from the deep pit."

Jane's pale lips seemed to move as she made a response.

" Deliver them from the lion's mouth lest hell swallow them, and lest they fall into darkness.

" Let the standard bearer Saint Michael bring them unto the holy light which of old thou didst promise to Abraham and to his posterity."

" Amen !" responded the calm voice of the old Dominican.

St. Bernard shut his missal, and covered his face with the sleeve of his vestment.

As one man, the silent thousands raised their heads, and Sanders Screw shook the flame of his torch, to light it fully.

Jane arose, and gazed placidly around her.

The time had come !

Then, if it could be possible, the heart of Roland Vipont beat quicker, and he unsheathed his sword.

" Aid me, thou blessed power, whom all these hearts have invoked ! aid me for her sake ! But aid or no aid, if I am forsaken, 'tis but the soldier's death ! Vipont ! Vipont !" he exclaimed, and suddenly urging his horse towards the stake, he threw his left arm around Jane, and drew her across his saddle before any one could have the least idea of what he meant to do ; and brandishing his sword around his head, dashed the gory spurs again into the torn flanks of his horse.

Appalled by the rapidity of the action, the vast assemblage stood immovable.

Down the frightful steep towards the King's Meuse he rode with the speed of an arrow ; and, as the clouds

part before a thunderbolt, the horsemen gave way, and the people parted before him.

"Shut the gates of the town!" cried Sir Andrew Preston; but a roar of voices burst from the multitude, and amid that roar his voice was confounded and lost.

Fortunately the gates were open, and deserted by their warders; and thus, before the people had recovered from their astonishment, and before the troopers of Gourtown were ordered to pursue, Roland Vipont, with his rescued prize, had cleared the Castle Wynd, the crowded market-place, and left the city's western barrier far behind him, as he spurred, like a whirlwind, towards the wood and marshes of Corstorphine, where, almost girded by a lake, and surrounded by a deep moat, the strong and stately fortress of the Forresters awaited him with open gates.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

" So they were wedded, and life's smoothest tide
Bore on its breast the bridegroom and the bride."

Croly.

WITH these two lines we might fairly dismiss the hero and the heroine of these volumes, without describing or expatiating on the explanations that brought about a termination so pleasing; but it suddenly occurred to us that the reader, who had kindly accompanied us so far, might have some curiosity to learn the fate of the other actors in our drama or history, for it partakes of both.

Jane's relation accounted for the extorted letter which caused such pain to Roland; and the next messenger from Falkland announced that a pardon had actually been granted by the king, while the whole plot against her life and honour, was fully revealed and made conspicuous by the secret papers and correspondence of Redhall, all of which were purchased at the sale of the effects of an eminent antiquary, lately deceased, and are preparing for publication by a Scottish literary club.

Roland and his bride lived to see the subversion of all order in the days of the Douglas wars, when he

fought valiantly under the Duke of Chatelherault for his queen, like a man of truth and honour, for which he received from her own fair finger a ring of gold, which his descendants possess unto the present day.

Released from Inchkeith by order of the king, the venerable Countess of Ashkirk had soon after the happiness of procuring from Rome, through the influence of Cardinal Beaton, a dispensation by which Sybil Douglas, of Kilspindie, was married to her cousin, the earl, who survived that period more than fifty years; and, during a long and useful life, was eminently distinguished for his loyalty and patriotism. The last time we heard or read of him was in 1587, when, on tidings of Mary's murder at Fotheringay arriving at Edinburgh, he appeared at Holyrood with his eight tall sons, all sheathed in black armour, to show king James VI. what he considered the most proper court mourning for the occasion.

Father St. Bernard lived to see the Reformation, which nearly broke the old man's heart; for he thought that the end of the world was at hand. In his ninetieth year he died among the monks of St. Jerome, at the Escorial, in Spain, whither he had travelled to deposit the arm bone of St. Giles.

Ten years after the events we have narrated, the gallant Sir John Forrester fell, fighting for his country, at the battle of Pinkey, on the 10th September, 1547. He was shot when making a brilliant charge with his own vassals against those regiments of Spanish arquebusiers, who, under Don Pedro de Gamboa, gained that battle for the Duke of Somerset.

Honest old Lintstock, the ex-gunner, instead of settling on the estate which Vipont received in free barony from the king, married the hostel, or rather the

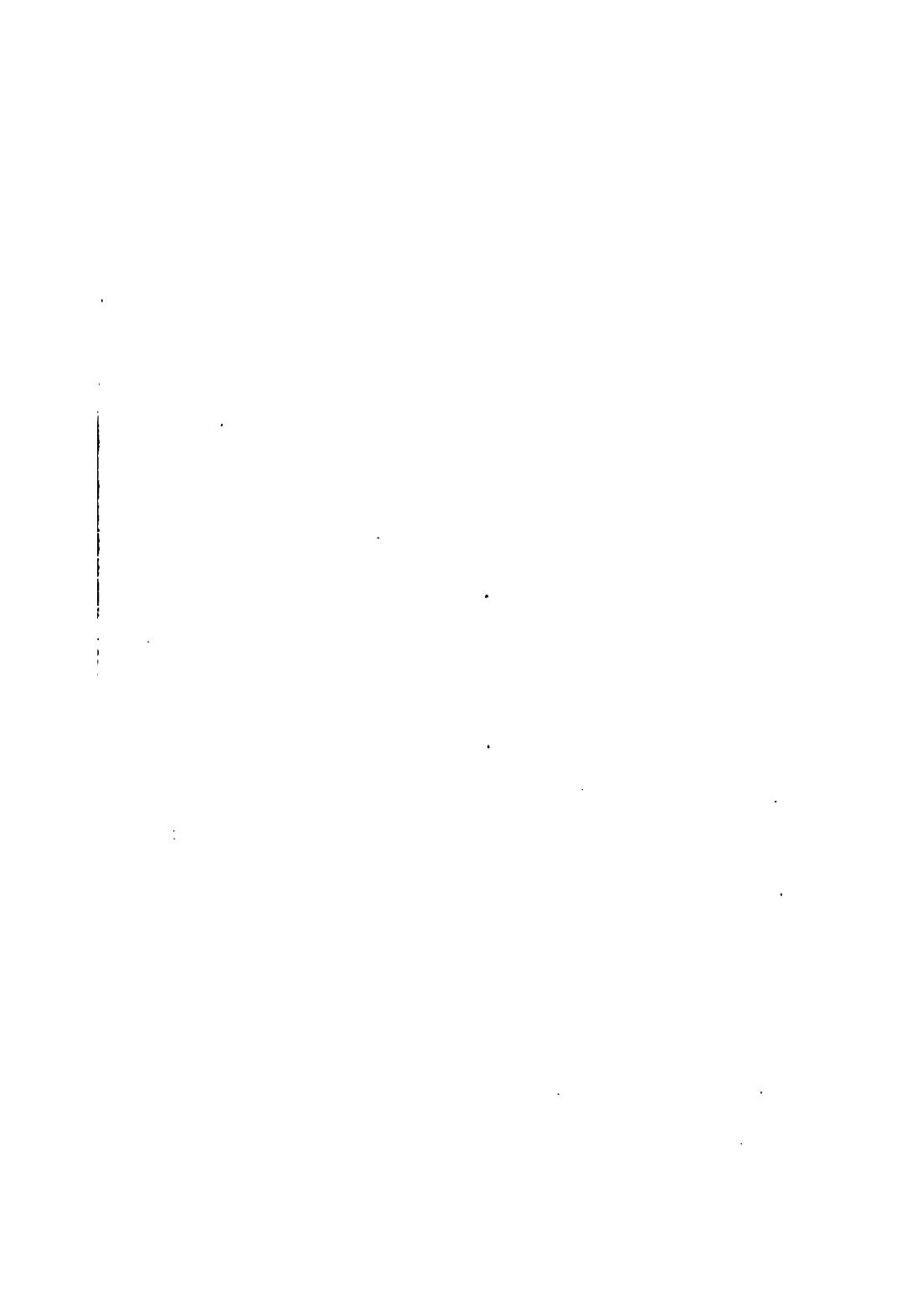
hosteller's widow, to whom he had paid his court so long, and though he became one of the wealthiest burghesses of the good town, instead of becoming either a councillor or baillie, he preferred to doze away his time by the tap-room fire, where, with other old iron-headed troopers and trampers, over a can of mumbeer, he told long and interminable stories of the battles of Flodden and Haddonrig; of sakers, of carthouns, and cannons-royale; and of blowing Englishmen, Spaniards, and Highlandmen all to rags and fritters, for he had fought against them all in his time.

The end of Dobbie the doomster is buried in obscurity, unless we connect him in some way with the same legal functionary who is said to have drowned himself by leaping, in a drunken fit, from the steep pinnacle of rock which overhangs the Loch of Duddingstone, and is now known as the *Hangman's Knowe*; but if it will comfort the reader to know the end of Birrel the brodder, we may add that this amiable individual became unfortunately involved in the murder of Cardinal Beaton in the year 1546, and being taken with other prisoners when St. Andrew's was stormed by the admiral of the galleys, Leon, prior of Capua, he was conveyed to France, where he died, miserably chained to an oar, and scourged almost to a skeleton, in a galley at Brest.

John of the Silvermills, first deacon of the barber chirurgens at Edinburgh, never completed his famous elixir, which would have brought his profession to a close, and enabled us to live without an ache or an ailment for ever. This precious compound was just on the point of completion by the addition of that small ingredient it had lacked so long, and for which he had found a substitute in the blood of a certain reptile, mentioned in the black letter "Ereptology" of Francis

Redi, when one dark night ten thousand Englishmen landed and gave all to fire and sword in and around Edinburgh. This was Lord Hertford's famous invasion in 1544.

Poor John's laboratory was destroyed, and for months afterwards he was to be seen, like the ghost of himself, rending his beard and lamenting over the ruins of his premises, strewed with shattered retorts and broken crucibles, and mourning heavily, like another Jeremiah, over the fall of an imaginary Babylon.



NOTES.

I.

JANE SETON.

THE unfortunate passage in Scottish history, which afforded a hint for the foregoing romance, will be found in "Pitcairn's Criminal Trials," at considerable length, and also in a little history of the "Life of James V.," reprinted in *Miscellanea Scotica* from the edition of 1710; but as both these works may be beyond the reader's reach, we may briefly state the facts as being these.

In the year 1537, Jane Douglas, the young and beautiful widow of Lord Glammiss, and sister of the Earl of Angus, together with her second husband, the Laird of Skipness, an aged priest, and others, were accused by a person named William Lyon, of endeavouring the compass to king's death by poison and sorcery.

Slighting the addresses of Lyon and many others who aspired to her hand, after the death of Lord Glammiss, she had preferred Campbell of Skipness; upon which Lyon, inflamed by rivalry and revenge, made a terrible vow, that his life should be dedicated to her destruction; and hence came the charge, upon which she and her immediate friends were committed to the Castle of Edinburgh.

"The accuser, who had the ear of the jealous king, used all his rhetoric to aggravate the matter, that he might dispose him to treat them with all possible cruelty," says the old French author of James the Fifth's life. "He represented that the family of Douglas had always been dangerous and troublesome to his predecessors, himself, and his kingdom; and

reminded him of the insolence of Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, the prisoner's brother, in the time of his majesty's minority—a peer whose practices were so pernicious that, by a public decree, he was banished the kingdom, as a disturber of the peace of his native country ; and that since that time he had become the subject of Henry, King of England.”

Examined, on *the rack*, by the king's advocate, and questioned mercilessly, notwithstanding her rank, delicacy, and beauty,—for which she was renowned through all Britain,—she was compelled to admit the alléged treason and sorcery ; and James having solemnly sworn never to forgive a Douglas, she was burned alive on the Castle Hill, on the 17th July, in presence of the citizens, and almost in view of her son and husband, who were confined in David's Tower. There the former remained a prisoner until 1542 ; but the latter, when attempting to escape, like Roland Vipont, by means of a rope, on the night of the execution, fell, and was found next morning literally dashed to pieces, at the bottom of the rocks. Struck with remorse, James V., who was naturally a merciful prince, set the old friar at liberty. But it is remarkable that William Lyon was merely banished from Scotland ; while a quack named Makke, by whom the pretended poison, or magical preparation was made up, escaped with the loss of his ears.—*See Pinkerton, Tytler, Lesley, Arnot, &c. &c.*

II.

JOHN OF THE SILVERMILLS.

This character is purely imaginary. James IV. and James V., both great dabblers in alchemy, are said to have had a laboratory, furnace, and their appurtenances at Silvermills, a little village which took its name from these operations, and is now a district of Edinburgh. It was probably at these mills that the gold, of which great quantities were found during the reign of James V., was refined. The preface to the

French life of that monarch, printed at Paris in 1612, states that he had "three hundred men employed for several summers in washing gold, of which they got above £100,000 of English money."

Lest some may suppose that we have overdrawn the popular credulity of 1537, in delineating John of the Silver-mills, we may mention that it is not long since a similar character existed in Scotland, and was put under the ban of an ecclesiastical court.

This individual, whose name was Andrew Dawson, lived on the Grampians, and having been unfortunate as a farmer, became a veterinary surgeon, and dealer in herbs for the cure of his own species. His mother having enjoyed the reputation of being *uncanny*, Andrew easily succeeded to this unenviable inheritance; but patients flocked to him from all quarters, and his chief mode of cure was friction, accompanied by charms muttered, or chaunted, in an unintelligible language. "His hut," says the *Dundee Courier*, "which was built by himself, like the *Black Dwarf's*, on a muir, was situated not far from a spot called the 'Fairy's Knowe,' and was the terror of the benighted traveller." Strange sounds were heard; unearthly lights were seen; and the fama of unhallowed rites, together with a distemper among the cattle, soon brought Andrew on a distinct "charge of sorcery before the Kirk Session."

This Scottish Paracelsus had treated three citations with sovereign contempt; but he was compelled to attend on the fourth being served at his hut; and on the appointed day appeared before the Session an aged and infirm man. On the minister asking him if he "wished the sentence of excommunication reponed, and on what grounds?" Andrew pulled from his ample pouch three common quartz pebbles, and explained that in all diseases of the *head* he had employed, by friction, one which bore a rude resemblance to that part of the body. In diseases of the *heart*, he used another, shaped like that organ; and the third was for affections of the *kidneys*, to which it bore a resemblance. As to his wakes and nightly orgies, he admitted that they were meant to

impose upon the ignorant, and increase the mystery. "To describe the shame and astonishment at this recital would have required the pen of Scott, or the pencil of Allan."—*Dundee Courier*, Dec. 25th, 1851.

He died a few months after this scene; the last instance in Scotland of belief in sorcery, followed by kirk censure; and his resting-place is still pointed to, with something of fear, as "the warlock's grave." A still later instance of popular credulity will be found mentioned in the London *Times*, of the 10th January, 1852, wherein a gentleman of Marseilles was accused of diseasing a child, by sorcery and the *evil eye*.

III.

THE THUMB.

The ancient mode of confirming any bargain or bond, for good or for evil, in Scotland, was by the pressure of wetted thumbs, an eastern custom, which is still traceable among the Moors, and other tribes. It may still be found among the boys in some districts of Scotland. Doubtless the various sayings now common among the peasantry, such as, "Here's my thumb on't,"—"Ye needna fash your thumb,"—"Keep your thumb on that,"—or, "Having one *under* your thumb," &c., have arisen from this old custom. The heart-shaped stone, on which parties were wont to press their wetted thumbs, when ratifying their bargains at the Cross of Edinburgh, was presented about three years ago by the Town Council to Lord Cockburn. Prior writes,

"Now let us *touch thumbs*, and be friends ere we part;
Here, John, is my thumb, and here, Mat, is my heart."

Various old songs record this mystic sign of truth and fealty; one in *Orpheus Caledonius*, 1725, says,

"Dearest maid! nay, do not fly me,
Let your pride no more deny me;
Never doubt your faithful Willie,
There's *my thumb*, I'll ne'er beguile ye."

Another, in Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, 1723, has it,

"Though kith and kin, and a' revile ye,
There's my thumb, I'll ne'er beguile ye."

To *bite* the thumb at any one was anciently an insult in Scotland and England, as it is still in France. Scott mentions it in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, when describing the quarrel between the Laird of Hunthill and Conrad of Wolfenstein, canto vi.,

"Stern Rutherford right little said,
But *bit* his glove, and shook his head," &c.

And Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, has,

"I will bite my thumb at them, which is a disgrace if they bear it!"

"Dags and pistols! to bite his thumb at me!"

Innumerable other instances might be cited.

IV.

THE BRODDER.

As stated in the text, this was an indispensable legal functionary, whose name occurs frequently in all trials for witchcraft in Scotland. Among the expenses for burning Margaret Denholm, is the following item:—"To Jhone Kinked, for ye *brodding* of her, vi. lib. Scotts."—*Pit. Crim. Trials*.

In March, 1649, the magistrates of Newcastle employed a noted Scottish witch-pricker, to discover all those who dabbled in sorcery within the walls of their town, "offering him twenty shillings a-piece for all he should condemn as witches, and a free passage thither and back" to Scotland. A proclamation by bell summoned all persons to give information of witchcraft; thirty women were brought to the Town Hall, stripped nude, had a pin thrust into their flesh by this charlatan, who acquainted Lieut.-Colonel Hobson, the English commandant, that they were guilty, and that "he knew whether women were witches or no by their *look*"; but when the

said person was searching of a personable and goodlike woman, the Colonel said, 'surely this woman is none, and need not be tried;' but the Scotsman said she was, and therefore he would try her; and presently he ran a pin into her, and set her aside as a guilty person and child of the devil, and fell to try others whom he pronounced guilty. Lieut.-Colonel Hobson proved upon the spot the fallacy of the fellow's trial of the woman; and then the Scotsman cleared her, and said she was *not* a child of the devil." After being paid in Newcastle, this witchfinder went into Northumberland, to *prove* women at the rate of "three pounds a-piece;" but, on returning into Scotland, his villany came to light, and he was hanged, confessing "at the gallows, that he had been the death of above *two hundred and twenty women* in Scotland and England, for the gain of twenty shillings a-piece."—See *Sykes's Local Records of Newcastle*.

As mentioned in the romance, the *broad*, or steel pin, used in piercing the devil's mark, is now supposed to have been made to slip into its handle, thus giving the appearance of entering the body without producing pain—an infallible sign of sorcery.

Within two years after the publication of James the Sixth's *Demonologie*, twenty-six persons were tortured for witchcraft, at Aberdeen, and twenty-one were condemned to the flames. "It would have been considered a prodigal wasting of such a happy windfall, to have burned all these wretches at once; and accordingly," says the *Book of Bon Accord*, "by judicious management, and by bringing two or three to the stake at a time, it was contrived to delight the public with incremations on the Castle Hill for upwards of a twelve-month."

The *last witch* in Scotland, was accused of transforming her daughter into a pony, and getting her shod by the devil, for which she was burned in 1722, near the Earl's Cross at Dornoch, in Sutherland.

Of the *last witch* in England, a curious account will be found in the *Courier*, of the 28th February, 1834, which

records one of the most gross and startling instances of superstition ever known; it concerned the enchantment of a herd of pigs in the Forest of Dean. See also the *Monmouth Merlin*, of the same date.

The Act against Witchcraft was not repealed in Scotland and England until about 1750; and not in Ireland until 1821!

THE END.

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